

A Green Home Checklist

Make Your Existing or Future Home a Greener Place to Live



A green home is an earth and people-friendly home, protecting the health of your family and the environment. It's a more comfortable, durable, higher quality home. It's easier and more economical to live in, because it's low-maintenance, and energy and water efficient.

This checklist will help you make a more informed choice about your present or future home. Review your home (since there's always room for improvement) or a home you are interested in with this checklist in hand.

THE RIGHT SITE

A site with smart landscaping is important to help make your home comfortable, affordable and attractive.

- Water-efficient bermuda or buffalo grass is planted in sunny areas.***
- Plants, shrubs and trees that grow successfully in Central Texas are chosen. Use the City of Austin Preferred Plant List as a guideline. The Native Plant Search is another great tool.***
- Gutters and downspouts direct water away from house.***
- An irrigation system conserves water by using devices such as manual flow-control valves, a rain shut-off, and a timer with multiple start times.***

THE RIGHT DESIGN

Comfort and economy is possible when a house is designed for its site and climate.

Minimal Solar Heat Gain:

- Longest walls face north and south.***
- Most windows face north and south.***
- Most windows are shaded on the outside by overhangs, covered porches, awnings, trees, trellises, or pergolas.***
- Garage and least-used rooms are positioned on west side as buffers from the west sun.***

Maximum Ventilation:

- Most windows are operable and positioned for cross breezes.***
- Most rooms have windows on two walls.***
- High, centrally-located, operable windows enable hot air to move up and vent to the outside.***

THE RIGHT EXTERIOR

Cool Shell and Attic:

- Light colored paint, siding, and roofing are used.*
- A continuous vent strip runs underneath the roof overhang to let air into the attic.*
- Roof ridge has a continuous strip of venting or several passive vents close to the ridge.*
- Attic insulation does not block air flow path between roof overhang vents and ridge vents.*

- Attic has a radiant barrier below the roof decking or between the rafters (looks like aluminum foil). Radiant barrier is especially effective when ductwork is in the attic.*

Minimum Maintenance:

- Exterior wall material is low maintenance (brick, stone, stucco, cement board).*
- Roof has forty-year life (metal or tile).*

- Decks are made of materials that have at least a 10-year life (not solid wood).*

Maximum Insulation:

- Insulation is at least 10 inches deep and evenly distributed. (Attic insulation is far more important in the Central Texas climate than wall insulation.)*
- Wall insulation is a type that fills every nook and cranny, such as wet-blown cellulose.*

Optimal Windows:

- Unshaded windows have solar screens or low-e glass (except on the north side).*
- No skylights except solar tubes. (Solar tubes are okay.)*
- Window frames are wood, vinyl or fiberglass.*

THE RIGHT INTERIOR

Using the right materials can improve indoor air quality and increase comfort. Choosing energy efficient appliances will save you money.

Healthy Materials:

- Flooring is mostly a hard surface, such as concrete, tile or wood.*
- Other flooring materials are natural wool, jute, sea grass, cork or true linoleum.*
- No vinyl wallpaper is used in the home.*
- Bath has exhaust fan vented to outside.*
- Cook top has exhaust fan vented to outside.*
- Laundry/utility room has exhaust fan vented to outside.*

Efficient Appliances and Lights:

- Water heating has a 10-year warranty.*
- An Energy Guide Label that indicates the appliance is in the top 25% of the efficiency scale.*
- Exterior lights have light and motion detectors to conserve energy.*

Efficient Heating and Cooling:

- Ceiling fans in all major rooms.*
- Home has a whole-house fan to exhaust heat.*
- Home has a programmable thermostat.*
- Home has an A/C with a cooling efficiency is 12.0 SEER or higher.*
- Cooling system is "the right size" for the house. As a rule, if there are fewer than 600 sq. ft. of living space per ton of cooling, the unit is too big or the house is not designed for this climate. Ask a trained technician about a Manual J analysis, based on actual design and specifications. For our climate, oversized equipment does not run long enough to operate efficiently or dehumidify enough comfort.*

Well-sealed Ducts:

- Ducts have been pressure-tested for leaks by a qualified technician. Remember, most houses lose about 25% of conditioned air due to leaky ducts. Leaks cause air quality and safety problems, too.*
- With AC running, no cold air drafts at the duct joints and other connections.*

Air Filters:

- The filter is accessible and easy to change.*
- The system has a 6" wide filter cabinet with pleated-media or electronic filter (not electrostatic).*

THE RIGHT ECONOMY

Using local businesses and products keeps the local economy healthy, while reducing the affects of transportation on Austin's air quality.

- Regional materials, such as mesquite, native cedar, pecan wood, local brick, limestone and granite, are used.*
- Services of local artists and artisans are used for items such as cabinetry, wall murals, and decorative metal work.*

THE RIGHT LIFESTYLE

The right location of your home improves your quality of life.

- The home is conveniently located for activities, such as work, school, entertainment, recreation, and public transportation.*
- Traffic allows safe walking and biking.*
- The home has a front porch big enough to use.*

Thank you for your interest in Austin Energy's Green Building Program

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