buyers guide

Buying a home is a significant investment and a choice that will have long-term consequences for your quality of life — including how you live and how you work. Your family’s health and well-being are at stake. The home you buy can have an impact on your environment — from the natural resources consumed to the construction and maintenance of the home generated to keep it there. It’s a big decision — do it right.

green homes

The Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS), and by extension the Northwest Association of REALTORS®, give you the tools to find energy-wise or energy-efficient homes — for a single-family, attached, or condominium home. Nationally, there is a drive toward certification in the 1,000+ projects that are certified around the country. This guide provides an overview of some green building certifications available to you, and how they can help you improve the energy efficiency and occupant health in the homes on the market.

Buyers can search for green homes on the NWMLS database with the new Environmental Certifications feature. These certifications are used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN™, ENERGY STAR® and LEED®.

BUILT GREEN™ is a residential green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties with rating criteria for single-family homes, condominiums, remodels, and housing developments. Certifications range from 2 to 5-Star, with 4 & 5-Star levels for new Environmental Certifications. Third-party verifiers conduct performance testing on homes to ensure they meet the ENERGY STAR® criteria.

Leed® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a national green building certification system developed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC). Single-family homes and condominiums can be certified with LEED® for Homes. Large condominum buildings are certified under LEED® for New Construction. For more information on LEED certification, visit www.usgbc.org.

ENERGY STAR® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a program created to improve the energy efficiency of products, buildings, and homes. It is a voluntary program that offers a simple, proven process for making energy-efficient upgrades to existing buildings. For more information, visit www.energystar.gov.

Further Reading


The Northwest Green Home Primer by Kathleen O’Brien & Kathleen Smith (Timber Press, 2008)

City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

City Green Building

City of Seattle

City of Seattle

BUILT GREEN™

www.builtright.com

ENERGY STAR®

www.energystar.gov

LEED®

www.usgbc.org

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Want to learn more?

City of Seattle Green Building Program: www.cityofseattle.gov/greenbuilding

King County Green Tech Program: www.greenwashesn.org

Home Certification Programs

BUILT GREEN™: www.builtright.com


LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design): www.usgbc.org

(properties)

BUILT GREEN™ offers a rating system for homes, including how you travel to and from work, your family’s health, and your utility bills. The home you buy also has an impact on our environment — from the natural resources consumed to the construction and maintenance of the home generated to keep it there. It’s a big decision — do it right.

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This information can be made available on request to accommodate people with disabilities.

City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

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green homes

The Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS), and by real estate professionals in our region, have developed a system that makes it easier for you to find energy and environmentally-friendly homes. It’s a single-family, townhome, or condominium to your taste, style, and needs. With criteria such as location or number of bedrooms, you can zero in on a property which is right for your family. The listings available in the NWMLS database are third-party verified.

Green homes are now searchable in the NWMLS database with the Green Home Primer. Green building certification programs: BUILT GREEN™, ENERGY STAR®, LEED Green Building Rating System have been developed by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties with rating criteria for single-family homes, condominiums, remodels, and housing developments. Certifications range from 2 to 5-Star, with 4 & 5-Star levels designed for new homes, with a primary focus on energy efficiency and occupant health. Third-party verifiers conduct audits of new homes with a primary focus on energy efficiency of new homes with a primary focus on energy efficiency and occupant health.

Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN™, ENERGY STAR® and LEED®.

BUILT GREEN™ is a residential green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties. Creation with strong criteria for single-family homes, townhomes, and condominiums, BUILT GREEN™ is a progressive certification system. Certifications range from 2 to 5-Star, with & 5-Star levels being the highest levels available.

Northeast ENERGY STAR® Homes improve the energy efficiency of your home with a primary focus on energy efficiency and comfort. This program incorporates the ENERGY STAR® ratings system.

LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is a national green building certification system controlled by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). Single-family homes and condominums are rated with LEED® for Homes. Large condominium buildings are rated under LEED® for New Construction and Existing Buildings.

Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time by Kathleen O’Brien & Kathleen Smith (Timber Press, 2008)


The Northwest Green Home Primer by Kathleen O’Brien & Kathleen Smith (Timber Press, 2008)

Further Reading:


National Fenestration Rating Council certified windows: www.nfrc.org

WaterSense labeled toilets, faucets, and other products: www.epa.gov/watersense

GreenGuard® indoor air quality certified paints, finishes, adhesives, flooring, and other products: www.green-guard.org

Buyer’s guide

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The Northwest Green Home Primer by Kathleen O’Brien & Kathleen Smith (Timber Press, 2008)
The City of Seattle's Green Home Guides cover resources and strategies to create a home that's healthy, saves money, and is easy on the environment.

www.seattle.gov/dpd/GreenBuilding/GreenHomeGuides

- Resources/RemodelingGuides
- Building/SingleFamilyResidential

The materials and practices used to construct your home will have a serious impact on your family's health. Many of the cost and comfort building products, such as particle board and paint, off-gas harmful volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that you can't see, taste, or smell. Improperly constructed and ventilated homes can increase the potential for mold growth.

Healthy indoor air

- Are there air-tight doors and windows?
- Is the home well insulated, with U-Values of .35 or lower.
- Are there upgraded doors with R-21 or better?
- Are thermostats set to 68 degrees or lower when you're not home or sleeping.
- Are carpeted rooms limited to small areas, or carpet from a sustainably managed source?

Sustainable materials

- Are there recycled or rapidly renewable building products used to build this home?
- Has the home been built from a sustainably managed source?

Water conservation

- Are there ENERGY STAR rated front loading clothes washers and dishwashers.
- Is the location provided the convenience of public transportation?
- Are there copies of utility bills.
- Does this home have an energy efficiency ratio of 8 or higher?
The City of Seattle’s Green Home Guides contain numerous
reducing topics, from Energy Audits and Roofing, and
guide helpful hints on materials
and strategies to create a house
that’s healthy, saves money, and is easy on the environment:
www.seattle.gov/dpd/Green

size
The average size of a new home in the U.S. has more than doubled in the last 50 years
from 1,400 square feet to 2,439 square feet[1], while the average size of the family occupying these homes has
dropped from 3.2 to 2.3 people[2]. That’s about 900 square feet per person. A smaller house is
infinitely more resource efficient and your ongoing costs for utilities and maintenance will
keep low.

A well-designed small house can provide the same amenities as a larger one, at a lower cost.
A: Great idea for your home, which

site and landscaping
How your house is landscaped has an enormous impact on your consumption, water quality in our
ocean resources, and the water that lies in our urban environment. Appropriate site design practices include:

■•• trees and native vegetation on the site and amending the topsoil with compost
■•• trees, especially those to the south and west of a house, provide natural shading that
■•• native, drought-tolerant plants and minimal lawn areas reduce the water needed for
■•• “Rain gardens” that slow stormwater runoff, along with porous surface materials such as pavers, allow rainwater to percolate into the soil in your yard. This reduces the
■•• trees, shrubs, and native vegetation can reduce the water needed for

energy efficiency
Home energy use is responsible for 20% of CO₂ emissions nationwide. A well insulated, airtight, envelope with minimum R-21 walls, R-38 roofs and R-30 floors (higher is better).

■•• A well-ventilated, airtight envelope with minimum R-21 walls, R-38 roofs and R-30
■•• Windows certified by the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) with a U-Value of .30 or lower.
■•• Energy Star labeled windows, including double or triple-pane windows, as well as Passive House standards.

■•• Energy efficiency will reduce fuel use, greenhouse gas emissions and your utility bills. In the Northwest an ENERGY STAR® home will be at least 15% more efficient than a house built to current building codes. An energy-efficient home will have:

■•• Energy Star labeled high-efficiency toilets, including dual-flush, rated at 1.28 gallons per flush.

■•• ENERGY STAR® rated heating equipment, appliances and light fixtures.

■•• It’s better off for your family’s health. Many of the glues and solvents used in building products, such as particle board and pans, emit harmful volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that can cause headaches, respiratory problems and can contribute to indoor air quality issues.

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■•• French doors should be used selectively – new output of green building (GBI) spec. new

■•• WaterSense labeled high-efficiency toilets, including dual-flush, rated at 1.28 gallons per flush.

■•• Multi-use rooms, an office that also serves as a guest room, for instance, allow you to consolidate less frequently used spaces.

location, location, location
Where you buy not only affects the home’s current and future value, but also affects your
living, shopping, and public transportation costs you’ll spend less time in your car and more time on activities you truly want.

■•• Check available transit services before moving to ensure you can get to work, school and recreational activities.

■•• Also, consider the home’s walkability. The closer you are to the neighborhood walk

健康室内空气

水保

What non-toxic materials were used for the home’s construction?

■•• Sustainable materials

健康室内空气

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What were the sustainable materials used to build this home?

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The City of Seattle’s Green Home Guide offers a complete, easy-to-use guide to creating a green home that is healthy, saves energy, and is environmentally sound. The goal of the Green Home Guide is to provide you with the necessary information and strategies to create a green home that is healthy, saves energy, and is environmentally sound.

### Green Home Guide:

1. **What is a green home?**
   - A building is often said to have a “footprint” which represents the outline of the structure on the ground. But any building, including your home, also has an ecological footprint – the environmental impact to build and operate that home. A green home has been constructed to minimize its environmental footprint, while at the same time ensuring comfort, durability, a healthy indoor environment and low utility costs.

2. **Location, location, location**
   - Where you buy not only affects the home’s current and future value, but also affects your lifestyle. Finding a home in a neighborhood with quick and safe access to restaurants, shopping, recreation and public transportation means you’ll spend less time in your car and more time on activities you truly enjoy.

3. **Energy efficiency**
   - Home energy use is responsible for 20% of CO₂ emissions. Choosing, or re-creating, a more energy-efficient home will reduce fuel costs, greenhouse gas emissions and your utility bills. In the Northwest an ENERGY STAR® home will be at least 15% more efficient than a home built to current building codes. An energy-efficient home will have:
     - A well-sealed, air-tight envelope with minimum R-21 walls, R-38 attic and R-30 floors (higher is better).
     - Windows certified by the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) with a U-factor of 0.30 or lower.
     - A central heating and cooling system designed for the size of the house. Geothermal heating and cooling systems use the consistent temperature of the ground for heating and cooling.
     - Gas hot water heaters with efficiencies of 0.60 or greater and electric hot water heaters with efficiencies of 0.85 or greater, or condensation for water heaters.

4. **Water conservation**
   - Reducing water use both inside and outside your home will save you money and help ensure that our rivers continue to have enough water for both people and wildlife.
   - Energy-efficient appliances, such as waterSense labeled high-efficiency toilets, including dual-flush, rated at 1.28 gallons per flush, are just one measure that can save you money. Other water conservation strategies include:
     - WaterSense labeled high-efficiency toilets, including dual-flush, rated at 1.28 gallons per flush.
     - WaterSense labeled showerheads, faucets, and low-flow bathroom fixtures.
     - WaterSense labeled dishwashers, washers and dryers.

5. **Healthy indoor air**
   - The materials and practices used to construct your home will have a serious impact on your health. Many of the greatest threats to our health are found in the buildings we live and work in. The materials used to build your home can contribute to indoor air pollution and for health related problems caused by pollutants within the home.

6. **Sustainable materials**
   - The materials used to build your home also impact the environment. Sustainable materials are made from materials that are renewable, that are harvested in a way that is sustainable, or managed sustainably.

7. **Water saving devices**
   - The average size of a new home in the U.S. has more than doubled in the last 50 years to 2,439 square feet while the average size of the home occupying those homes has decreased to just 827 people. That’s about 2,680 square feet per person. A smaller home is inherently more resource efficient and your ongoing costs for utilities and maintenance will be lower.

8. **Environmentally safe home styles**
   - A well-designed small home can be the opportunity to create the green home that fits your specific needs. Existing Houses
   - An existing home may be the only way you have to achieve transportation cost savings. But any building, including your home, also has an ecological footprint – the environmental impact to build and operate that home. A green home has been constructed to minimize its environmental footprint, while at the same time ensuring comfort, durability, a healthy indoor environment and low utility costs.

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### Healthy indoor air

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### Sustainable materials

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### Ten questions to ask about your future home

1. Does the location provide the transit, services and recreation you and your family need?
2. Has the builder been certified by an established green building professional that is independent of your builder? Will they help you get on the path to certification?
3. Is the home well insulated, including energy-efficient windows?
4. What is the efficiency of the heating equipment and are they hot water heaters?
5. Are the appliances the right size?
6. For a new home—what are the latest sustainable practices for the site?
7. What will the ongoing water and maintenance costs be?
8. What tools were used to create this building?
9. What substitute, recycled or rapidly renewable materials were used in this build?
10. For a new home—what are the latest sustainable practices for the landscaping?
The Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS), and by real estate professionals and home buyers themselves. This guide will help you to find a home or property that suits your needs, whether you are looking for a home or property in or near Seattle, or are interested in buying a home or property in the Puget Sound region. This guide will help you to find a home or property that is energy-efficient, that use resources wisely, and that have healthy indoor air quality. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

BUILT GREEN® – a residential green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King, Snohomish, and Island Counties. Created with input from single-family home builders throughout Washington State, BUILT GREEN® Certifications range from 1 to 5-star levels, with 5-star levels being the most points awarded. BUILT GREEN® is a recognized third-party verification program that can be used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

ENERGY STAR® – a USDOE program that promotes sustainable building practices to improve the energy efficiency of new homes, condominiums, and townhouses. ENERGY STAR® is a residential green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King, Snohomish, and Island Counties. Created with input from single-family home builders throughout Washington State, BUILT GREEN® Certifications range from 1 to 5-star levels, with 5-star levels being the most points awarded. BUILT GREEN® is a recognized third-party verification program that can be used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

LEED® – a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) program developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED® is a voluntary program that provides a framework for green building design, construction, and operation. LEED® is a recognized third-party verification program that can be used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

The Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS), and by real estate professionals and home buyers themselves. This guide will help you to find a home or property that suits your needs, whether you are looking for a home or property in or near Seattle, or are interested in buying a home or property in the Puget Sound region. This guide will help you to find a home or property that is energy-efficient, that use resources wisely, and that have healthy indoor air quality. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

BUILT GREEN® – a residential green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King, Snohomish, and Island Counties. Created with input from single-family home builders throughout Washington State, BUILT GREEN® Certifications range from 1 to 5-star levels, with 5-star levels being the most points awarded. BUILT GREEN® is a recognized third-party verification program that can be used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

ENERGY STAR® – a USDOE program that promotes sustainable building practices to improve the energy efficiency of new homes, condominiums, and townhouses. ENERGY STAR® is a residential green building program developed by the Master Builders Association of King, Snohomish, and Island Counties. Created with input from single-family home builders throughout Washington State, BUILT GREEN® Certifications range from 1 to 5-star levels, with 5-star levels being the most points awarded. BUILT GREEN® is a recognized third-party verification program that can be used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.

LEED® – a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) program developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED® is a voluntary program that provides a framework for green building design, construction, and operation. LEED® is a recognized third-party verification program that can be used to ensure that a building was designed and built with the environment, health and community in mind. Green homes in Washington can be certified via three primary programs: BUILT GREEN®, ENERGY STAR®, and LEED®.