



Building Green in Panamá

...10 things all builders can do right now that will make a big difference.

By Edgar Veytia, CEO

Standards are evolving around the world to help define, quantify and certify green compliance. We, at Green Living, Inc., work closely with the United States Green Building Council standard, which is the authority overseeing the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification process. Other sustainability measurement criteria systems exist around the world such as the ISO 9000/14000 standards, the European Building Performance Certificate Methodology, Energy Star and the U.K.'s BREEAM Assessment Standard.

In nature, there are many shades of green. Therefore, green living has to be about balance. Extreme green is not sustainable, particularly in developing countries where the practical reality of green is an evolving process that every day grows greener. We believe in green by example, through cooperation and collaboration.

Underlying all certification processes is the intent to educate and inspire everyone to *be more green*. After all, we are all in this together.

In practice, the following list summarizes the general principles that all builders can apply immediately to reduce their impact on the environment and thereby take real, concrete steps toward the goal of true sustainability.

Storm Water Management

Retention ponds and cisterns for harvesting runoff for irrigation, planted filtration strips, green roofs and lush foliage over impervious surfaces are systems which filter pollutants before water returns to the aquifer.

Water Efficient Landscaping

Landscaping with indigenous plants, native species that don't depend on fertilizer, pesticides and irrigation cuts costs while reducing the introduction of chemicals and inorganic matter into the local ecosystem.



Rapidly Renewable Resources

Using building materials that regenerate quickly such as bamboo and cork reduces the depletion of limited resources and the velocity of ecosystem destruction around the world.

Low VOC Materials

Volatile Organic Compounds and other hazardous materials used in construction pose a risk to general health. Alternatives exist and are specified wherever possible.

Indoor Air Quality

Designing for proper airflow throughout indoor environments reduces the need for mechanical processing. Selecting green finishes, fixtures and furnishings reduces VOC contamination, energy costs and also contributes to the good health of occupants.

High Thermal Mass

Better heat transfer, therefore, cooling can be achieved within buildings constructed with a high thermal mass, consuming less energy than comparable conventional constructions.

Light Harvesting

Skylights, light wells and light windows along with the use of eaves, overhangs and other shading devices help reduce lighting energy costs by 20 to 60 percent.

Passive Cooling

Designed right, air cools as it flows into the building by displacing warm air, creating a natural convection that cools naturally while cutting down dependency on energy consuming electro-mechanical air conditioning systems.

Proper Building Siting

Going with Nature increases efficiency. Orienting a building to respond to the solar path optimizes the utilization of natural air convection as well as maximizing sunlight and shade where needed.

Recycled Content

Reaching first for recycled materials reduces waste and cuts down the load on municipal infrastructures. Local economies expand as value is extracted from the transformation of waste into reusable materials.



Green Resources

Aside from the solutions described above there are many diverse things a builder can do to construct sustainable buildings. In addition, there are many things we as individuals can do to reduce our impact and waste. For more information, visit any of these fine websites or Google, "sustainability". These are some of our favorites. Let us know of yours and we'll add them to the list:

[USGBC - Resource Index](http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=76) (comprehensive index) <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=76>

[USGBC - United States Green Building Council](http://www.usgbc.org/) <http://www.usgbc.org/>

[NRDC - Natural Resource Defense Council](http://www.nrdc.org/buildinggreen/) <http://www.nrdc.org/buildinggreen/>

[Panama Track - Insider's Guide to Panama Blog](http://www.panamatrack.com/) <http://www.panamatrack.com/>

[Architects / Designers / Planners for Social Responsibility](http://www.adpsr.org/Home.htm) <http://www.adpsr.org/Home.htm>

[Business for Social Responsibility](http://www.bsr.org/) <http://www.bsr.org/>

[Construction Materials Recycling Association](http://www.cdrecycling.org/) <http://www.cdrecycling.org/>

[Mexico Green Building Council](http://www.mexicogbc.org/) <http://www.mexicogbc.org/>

[World Green Building Council](http://www.worldgbc.org/) <http://www.worldgbc.org/>

Feel free to contact us at Green Living. We are pleased to share what we know with colleagues and join forces to leave a green legacy we can all be proud of.

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