WHAT IS LEED?

A green home is designed to have a positive impact on energy efficiency, environmental performance and human well being. LEED is a point-based certification system that measures how well a home performs as a green home.

For homebuilders,

LEED is a tool

used to set targets and track progress during the design and construction of a green home.

For homebuyers,

LEED is a scorecard

—like a nutrition label—that gives a clear, concise picture of all the ways a green home performs at a higher level.

For residents,

LEED is a seal of quality,

providing peace of mind that they are living in a home designed to deliver fresh air indoors and improved water and energy efficiency.

LEED is a program of the U.S. Green Building Council, a non-profit community of professionals working to bring green buildings to everyone within a generation.

WHAT DOES LEED MEASURE?

LEED recognizes performance in eight areas:

Indoor Environmental Quality The quality of the air indoors is often two to five times worse, and occasionally more than 100 times worse, than outdoor air, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. A LEED home is designed to maximize fresh air indoors and minimize exposure to toxins and pollutants.

Energy Efficiency The average American household spends around $1,500 every year on energy bills, according to the U.S. government's ENERGY STAR program. Based on average ENERGY STAR scores of LEED homes built so far, they have the potential to use 20-30% less energy, and some up to 60% less energy, than a home built to the International Code Council's standards for minimum energy efficiency. Less energy use means lower utility bills every month through the life of a house.

Water Efficiency Wasteful water use is both costly and risky, as population growth and a changing climate make clean, safe water an increasingly scarce resource. It is also directly tied to wasteful energy use: As much as 1/4-1/2 of the electricity used by most U.S. cities is consumed at municipal water and wastewater treatment facilities according to the U.S. Department of Energy. LEED homes use innovative strategies to reduce a home's water use and to find creative ways to reuse water.

Site Selection The old truism about prime real estate – location, location, location – is especially true of green homes. LEED encourages homes that are close to schools, shopping, work and transit, maximizing your quality of life and reducing the amount of time you waste in traffic.

Site Development During construction and beyond, a home can cause erosion, interfere with natural habitats and pollute waterways through stormwater runoff. LEED homes avoid destructive construction practices and have landscaping and other elements that protect the land where the home sits.

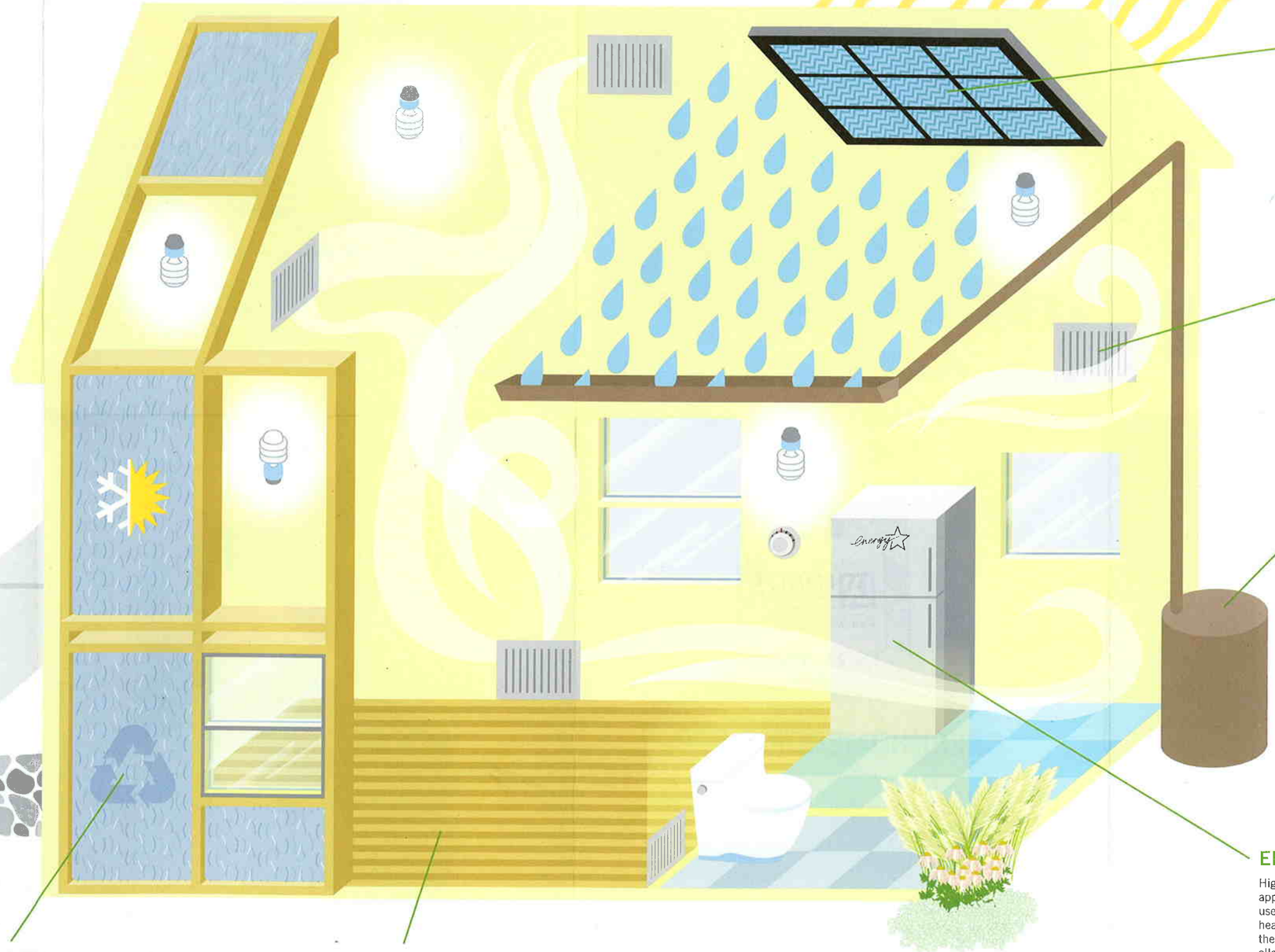
Materials Selection The materials and resources that go into a home can be carefully selected from sustainably harvested, responsibly processed sources – or they can be wasteful and contribute to habitat destruction. LEED homes use recycled, reclaimed and responsibly obtained materials everywhere possible.

Residents' Awareness LEED is proactive in educating homeowners and renters about a home's green features and how to get the highest performance from them. A LEED home also stands as an example to the community of a well-built home and encourages others to live the same.

Innovation LEED encourages builders and designers to find innovative ways to increase a home's performance, taking into account local and regional needs and promoting durability for a long-lasting, comfortable home.

A GREEN HOME

GREENHOMEGUIDE.ORG



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Remember that where a home is built is as important as how it is built. Being as close as possible to work, school, shopping, recreation, transit, walking and biking paths and other amenities will reduce your need to drive and will increase your health, well-being and quality of life.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

There are many ways to incorporate alternative energy sources into your home. The sun's rays can generate power or can be used to heat water. Geothermal heating and cooling systems use the ground to transfer heat. And many utility companies allow you to buy alternative energy directly from them.

CLEAN, FRESH AIR

Indoor air can be improved with the use of efficient HVAC systems that bring filtered outdoor air inside. Also, the use of non-toxic carpets, cleaning supplies, paints and finishes can further protect a home's occupants.

WATER EFFICIENCY

You can use less water with water-saving dishwashers, clothes washers, toilets, faucets and fixtures. And rainwater or "graywater" that's already been used inside can be captured and used to irrigate the native, drought-resistant plants in your landscaping.

A TIGHT ENVELOPE

You can keep the winter cold and the summer heat outside by choosing insulation with a high R-value and by making sure there are no gaps, cracks or leaks in your home's envelope. Also, a home's orientation on its lot and strategically placed trees can maximize the sun's rays in the winter while reducing the heat in the summer.

SMART MATERIALS SELECTION

From insulation materials to flooring, from upholstery to lumber, homes use a lot of natural and synthetic resources. Look for wood that is sustainably harvested, materials that have been recycled and produced locally, and the most durable products that won't soon need to be replaced.

A MORE NATURAL YARD

Landscaping with native plants prevents nonnative species from taking over an area's ecosystem, and avoiding monoculture (like lawn) promotes biodiversity. Erosion controls and permeable hardscaping keep dirty, polluted runoff water from nearby waterways. And smart landscaping reduces the need for toxic pest controls that can endanger your family and pets.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

High-efficiency light bulbs, fixtures, lamps and appliances can dramatically reduce your energy use. Low-energy lighting also produces less heat, cutting your heating bills. Programmable thermostats and room-by-room climate controls allow you to get the right level of comfort when and where you need it without wasting energy. And high-efficiency windows keep conditioned air from leaving the house.