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 if 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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