

What Does green Really Mean?

Dazed by the many definitions and standards?
Here is a guide to what each means. BY SCOTT GIBSON

Green building has finally edged into the mainstream of residential building. It's no longer a fringe construction category. Builders, architects, manufacturers, community planners and everyone else with a hand in the industry are looking for ways to capitalize on growing public interest.

At its best, the boom has encouraged

better building practices and better building materials, more energy and resource efficiency, lower maintenance costs for homeowners, and healthier homes. At its worst, "green" has become a label used to sell designs and products that do none of the above – what green building advocates would call "green washing."

Either way, the advertising blitzkrieg has probably left many consumers more

than a little confused. Homebuyers who want to know what they're paying for can turn to a number of industry standards for help. Although there is no single definition of the terms, three types of housing could potentially fill the bill: net-zero energy homes, Passive House homes, and houses that are rated by one of many regional or national green-building programs.