

Seven Principles of Sustainable Architecture

1. Start with What Works: Vernacular Wisdom

Look around at older homes in your neighborhood—they were often built to suit the local climate. Think deep eaves for summer shading, natural cross-ventilation, or materials that hold up well in New England winters. By integrating **site-specific, time-tested design** into your addition or remodel, you'll reduce your need for mechanical heating and cooling—**saving energy and money**.

2. Build for the Long Haul: Circular Design

Instead of building with short-lived materials that end up in landfills, consider:

- **Reclaimed wood** flooring or beams
- **Modular cabinetry or wall systems** that can be reconfigured later
- Designing so materials can be disassembled and reused

A little foresight now creates a home that can **adapt over time**, reduce waste, and save you from future renovation headaches.

3. Reuse What You Have

Before tearing down, ask: Can this be repurposed?

An unused garage, an old fireplace, even attic space can be transformed. Adaptive reuse not only **preserves the embodied energy** in existing structures, but also often **costs less than starting from scratch**. And character-rich original features? They're irreplaceable.

4. Get Smart with Tech

Modern sustainable homes pair nature with smart systems. Additions and upgrades are the perfect time to:

- Install **smart thermostats** and **lighting sensors**
- Integrate **solar panels** or **EV chargers**

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- Add **high-efficiency HVAC** and **air purification systems**

Smart choices now can cut utility bills for decades to come—and make your home future-ready.

5. Design for Efficiency

The best energy savings come from a building that needs **less energy to begin with**.

A sustainable renovation means:

- Better **insulation and air sealing**
- **High-performance windows** that keep your home comfortable
- **Efficient appliances and lighting** that reduce your bills

Many of these upgrades qualify for **state and federal rebates**, putting money back in your pocket.

6. Plan for the Unexpected

Sustainable homes are **resilient homes**—ready for power outages, storms, and extreme temperatures. Consider:

- Backup battery storage with solar
- Rainwater harvesting
- Using materials that are mold-, fire-, and weather-resistant

These features offer peace of mind while reducing long-term maintenance and insurance costs.

7. Create a Healthier Indoor Environment

Your renovation can improve the way your home *feels*—starting with the air you breathe. Sustainable materials help by:

- Avoiding toxins like VOCs, formaldehyde, and PFAS

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- Improving ventilation and controlling moisture
- Bringing in natural light and nature-inspired design

A healthier home isn't just good for the planet—it's better for you and your family, especially kids and older adults.

Sustainable = Smarter, Healthier, More Cost-Effective

You don't have to build a "green home" from the ground up to make a big impact. Every sustainable choice you make in a renovation or addition—no matter how small—adds up. Over time, you can reduce your costs, increase your comfort, and help create a home that reflects your values.