

Go green and be stylish!

Your upcoming home renovation can also be good for the environment.

There's already a lot to think about when planning a home renovation. Do you start with the bedroom carpet or the kitchen sink? Do you do it yourself or hire a contractor? And then there's the environment — you want a stylish home, but what about the impact on the planet? Does “environmentally friendly” mean compromising design, comfort and luxury?

To put it simply: not at all! Green renos can save you money, sure, but they can also spark a beautiful new look for a highly livable home. Whether you're going for understated elegance or rustic charm, boutique design firms specializing in environmentally conscious home renovations are now just a click away. If you're more inclined to do it yourself, you will find [no shortage of ideas](#) online, and most home building stores now carry a variety of high-efficiency lighting, faucets, and appliances that also stand out in the style department.

The real beauty of greening your home is that, rather than just updating the look of a room, eco renos can have a high return on investment. Done well, they can lower your monthly water and energy bills, improve your indoor air quality, reduce your impact on climate change and ultimately add value to the purchase price of your house.

So, where to begin? The first thing you need is information, particularly about how much water and energy your home uses and loses. For starters, you can assess your home's energy usage and savings potential with the [EcoLiving Home Energy Savings Calculator](#). Next, a home energy audit from a certified professional can help you take a closer look at the priority areas to tackle in your home. Then it's time to talk with a designer, or do your own research, to discover all the ways you can use this information to make your house more beautiful and eco-friendly.

The kitchen and bathroom are good places to start.

Nearly sixty-five per cent of household water is used in the bathroom — so there's no shortage of green renovation options here. Installing a high-efficiency showerhead and low-flow toilet are small ways you can save water in a really big way, without compromising comfort. Stylish green bathroom renos can be done on a tight budget, but many big projects pay for themselves in the long run.

The kitchen uses a lot of water and energy. In fact, the second biggest energy-sucker in your house lives here: the refrigerator. An Energy Star model can be up to 20 per cent more energy efficient than other models, especially if you choose one without an icemaker or water dispenser. And you can improve indoor air quality by replacing old kitchen cabinets with modern, low-VOC models (VOC stands for "volatile organic compounds," chemicals that transfer easily from paint and other household items into the air).

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