

REAL ESTATE

Sustainability now part of luxury emphasis in home design

January 15, 2021



A Californian home designed by Burdge. Image credit: Burdge Architects

By ELLEN KELLEHER

NEW YORK Sustainability and green architecture are now routinely included in high-end remodeling plans, after years of being dismissed as out of reach or extreme.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Speaking at the State of Luxury Real Estate eConference on Jan. 14, architects elaborated on why luxury and excellent design do not have to come at the expense of sustainability. These days, enthusiasm for going green excites architects who are studying the latest trends to keep up with fresh demand.

"Years ago, green architecture was more of an extreme," said Jennifer Hoppel, president at [Burdge Architects](#), Malibu. "Since then, we've gotten a lot better at understanding the impact we can have while still making sure that luxury is in the forefront."

State of Luxury Real Estate was produced by Luxury Daily in association with Luxury Portfolio International

Green fads

In the years since sustainability was ignored in home design, architecture firms have come a long way in addressing the issue.

"The education of our clients has really advanced," said Douglas Burdge, principal at Burdge Architects, Malibu. "Sustainability is the topic of conversation, whether or not somebody's in a luxury situation."

Building a new home now is like working in a laboratory, according to the panelists. As entire families become involved in home design, sustainability is pushed to the front burner.

"The kind of awareness you see with organic foods is an awareness that has come into the building industry as well," Ms. Hoppel said.

Consumers are no longer interested in living in homes that are off-gassing or releasing poisonous chemicals into the air. Instead, they want solar panels, induction stove tops and greater energy efficiency.



A Pacific Contemporary home also designed by Burdge Architects. Image credit: Burdge Architects

More homes are also being designed as if they were boutique hotels, with a full run of amenities ranging from pools and saunas to state-of-the-art gyms.

Architecture firms are also relying on specialty energy consultants to offer insights on sustainability improvements. Questions under consideration here include whether it makes sense to use recycled steel or rely on traditional "electrification" for a house.

Conducting business in California sets Burdge Architects apart, as the state has energy codes which set stricter standards.



More luxury homes are starting to incorporate solar energy. Image credit: Christie's International

The state's Title 24 restrictions require the firm to pre-wire for solar power and at some point, it is expected that rules will change to make solar paneling mandatory. Additionally, residents in certain California cities are no longer allowed to connect gas lines to new homes, leading to problems for cooks who prefer gas stoves.

Other green improvements requested by clients include solar panels, separate diesel and propane generators in case of a power outage, Zehnder systems to improve ventilation and any other advances that further carbon neutrality.

In one of its more elegant designs, Burdge Architects worked with clients in the city of Santa Monica, which has a reputation for environmental consciousness, to install solar panel railing on the roof. The firm later laid out the paneling in a way that makes its solar use indistinguishable from traditional roofing materials.

A commitment to the environment has been central to Burdge Architects for more than a decade.

When the firm began work on the MariSol development project in Malibu several years ago, sustainability was not a concern. In the years since, the project developers have adopted a green agenda for marketing and sales efforts and are now making all of their model homes carbon neutral.

"We did not compromise what we did as luxury design architects on this project, we simply integrated the green sustainability into that," Ms. Hoppel said. "This has proven to us that you can make anything green by choosing the right materials and the right consultants to make the right decisions."

In the end, a green house will be just as luxurious, more efficient and easier to market, the architects argue.

Home improvement here to stay

Around the globe, people are opting to invest in renovations to make their abodes more comfortable and state-of-the-art amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whether it is a new home office, spiffed-up kitchen, installation of a pool or an overall facelift, home renovations are helping consumers feel more comfortable in the spaces in which they are spending the most time ([see story](#)).

Interest in sustainable real estate has been growing for some time.

According to the National Association of Realtors' "Sustainability 2019 Report," 59 percent of agents and brokers reported that homebuyers were very or somewhat interested in sustainability. Younger buyers are especially interested in green features, not just for the energy savings, but for the peace of mind and the knowledge that they are doing their part to contribute to the environment ([see story](#)).

From a practical standpoint, green enthusiasm has become so widespread that its adoption in a home greatly ratchets up its value.

"Your home becomes a top-of-the-line product that you can sell quicker and easier and ask for more money for it because it will be appreciated," Mr. Burdge said.

© 2021 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.