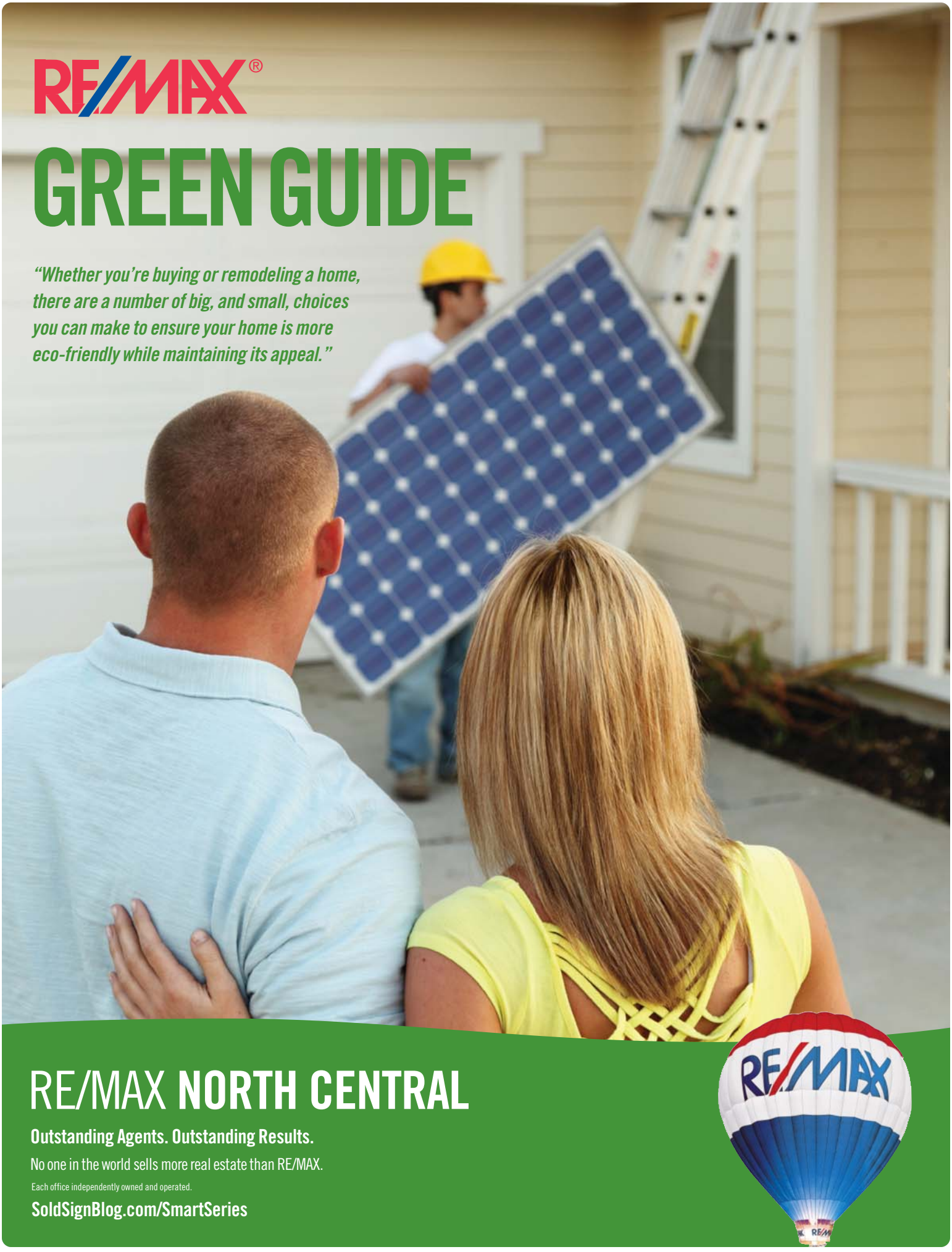

RE/MAX®

GREEN GUIDE

"Whether you're buying or remodeling a home, there are a number of big, and small, choices you can make to ensure your home is more eco-friendly while maintaining its appeal."

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Going Green

Whether you're buying or remodeling a home, there are a number of big, and small, choices you can make to ensure your home is more eco-friendly while maintaining its appeal. If you're getting ready to make home-buying or home-remodeling decisions, and want to incorporate 'green' alternatives, the RE/MAX Green Guide is a great tool to help you explore your options. Dive into the pages ahead to discover what environmentally conscious options you have when considering your home's exterior shell and inner workings. In addition you'll find great, sustainable choices for the cosmetic make-up of your home as well as simple tips and tricks to make your home more energy efficient while producing nice returns – for the environment and your wallet.

First Things First

Making a few 'green' choices for your home is a great way to lessen the damage and minimize future harm to the environment. Although you might want to jump in with both feet, doing so can be costly and overwhelming. Instead, wade in, taking one step at a time, starting with an Energy Audit.

An Energy Audit is the first step to being more energy efficient and will assess how much energy your home currently uses. You can either do it yourself or hire a professional; in fact, many utility companies offer an energy audit service – sometimes for free! Start by calling your utility company, and then if you need to, check out the following websites:

- **EnergyStar.gov**
- **EnergySavers.gov**

Both of these websites will guide you through a DIY Home Energy Audit as well as help find professionals in your area. Once you know where the least energy efficient area of your home is, you'll have an idea of where to start incorporating eco-friendly choices.

Projects for your home's outer core:

Whether you're remodeling an existing home or building a new home from the ground up, environmentally friendly concepts and products can be included in nearly every aspect of your home. Here are a few to consider:

Solar Panels

Solar panels allow you to become less dependent on your electric company by collecting sunlight and turning it into usable electricity for your home. Solar panels come in various styles; each is made with different materials and is partnered with a different inverter, which is the component that makes, stores, and emits the electricity. You will need to research these different styles and find which one will best suit your needs. Solar panels need to be installed on a rooftop, or on a stand-alone-structure that gets direct sunlight.

Roofing

Roofing materials are considered eco-friendly when they're either made out of recycled materials or built to be long-lasting, resulting in the use of fewer manufacturing resources and reducing landfill waste. If you're in the market for roofing materials consider recycled shingles made from recycled plastics, carpet and tires. If you prefer natural materials, choose from long-lasting options such as slate or steel; each has a life-span of 100 years or more. Whether you choose from recycled or long-lasting materials, each have individual benefits so you'll want to do some research to find which one is right for you. As you plan, don't forget to think about your roof's color – dark materials will absorb heat while light material will reflect it – affecting your home's overall energy efficiency.

Windows

Windows play a major role in your home's thermal envelope. If you're building a home, you'll want to consider which direction your windows face; check **Energystar.gov** to find what the best placement is for your location. If you're replacing existing windows consider the style; a casement window is the most energy efficient operable window whereas a double hung is the least energy efficient. You'll also want to look at the U-factor, which tells you how much heat escapes to the outside, and for Low-E glass, which cuts down the amount of ultraviolet rays coming in. In addition, consider investing in gas-filled windows; the gas acts as an additional insulator.

Insulation

Good insulation is vital to your home's overall energy efficiency as it helps slow down the transfer of heat from one area to a cooler area. There are a number of types of insulation to choose from but the two most common are blanket and spray. When choosing new blanket insulation consider the eco-friendly option of recycled insulation made from recycled material such as blue jeans, glass and newspaper. Spray insulation costs more up-front but is considered a good green choice because it's more energy efficient as it seals wall cavities better and saves more on energy costs. When installing or replacing insulation you'll want to pay special attention to the R-factor; this is a rating system which measures how much heat passes through - the higher the number, the better.

For the complete RE/MAX Smart Series, visit **SoldSignBlog.com/SmartSeries.**

Projects for your home's inner core:

Appliances

Kitchen/ Laundry

The easiest way to save energy inside your home is to consider replacing old, energy-consuming appliances with new EnergyStar appliances. The EnergyStar label is given to most household appliances including refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, and washing machines; new dryers don't generally save enough energy to be considered energy efficient, but if you're in the market for one consider choosing a model that has a moisture sensor. This way it'll shut itself off automatically when the clothes are dry.

Home

You'll also want to think about your home's HVAC system (furnace and air conditioner) and water heater. By cleaning and replacing your furnace filter every few months you'll maximize its air flow. For your water heater consider investing in a blanket or jacket; it'll help keep heat from escaping and reduce its energy use.

What is EnergyStar?

EnergyStar is a program created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy to help consumers save money and energy as well as protects the environment. The EnergyStar label is given to products that meet certain specifications based on EPA principles including verified energy savings and proven return on investments. EnergyStar products are stamped with the EnergyStar label but are also tagged with the yellow EnergyGuide sticker, providing details about their energy efficiency. For more details about the EnergyStar program visit **EnergyStar.gov**.

Did you know?

(EnergyStar statistics provided by www.EnergyStar.gov.)

- EnergyStar washers use 30% less energy and 50% less water.
- EnergyStar dishwashers are 10% more energy efficient.
- EnergyStar refrigerators are 20% more energy efficient.
- EnergyStar freezers can save you up to 70% a year in energy costs

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Projects for your home's inner core:

Remember...

Sometimes what makes a product "green" isn't necessarily what it's made of, but where it's made. Choosing local products manufactured in your city, county or state costs less to transport than something produced out-of-state. The less gas emitted during transportation makes for a smaller carbon footprint and a more earth-friendly product.

Materials

Building or remodeling with sustainable materials is now easier than ever.

Flooring

If you're thinking about re-doing your floors first consider what you already have in place; if you already have hardwood floors, but they're scratched and scuffed, the greenest thing to do is to refinish them. If you're getting rid of carpet and want to incorporate the wood look, consider bamboo or cork flooring. Both of these materials are highly renewable, durable and appealing. If you like the look and feel of carpet but need to update it, look for carpet that's made with natural fibers such as wool or jute, and that advertizes low or no chemical treatments. Also consider using recycled glass tiles or linoleum on your floors; they last longer than vinyl and are biodegradable.

Coun tops

If you're in the market for new countertops, there are a number of composite choices available to choose from. Reclaimed wood and recycled material such as glass, concrete, paper and aluminum are now commonly used to make durable and appealing kitchen and bathroom countertops. If you're still set on a stone countertop, consider searching for remnant pieces of granite or quartz.

Cabinets

If you're thinking about replacing your cabinets, first consider what you already have in place.
The greenest thing to do will be to paint or refinish what you have. If you're really set on new cabinets or are installing cabinets in a new home, look for cabinets that advertize formaldehyde-free cases and have low VOC (volatile organic compound) finishes; both of these are chemicals that easily transfer into the air.

Fixtures

There are two main types of fixtures to consider when going green: light fixtures and water fixtures.

Light Fixtures

Do you need to update some outdated light fixtures? Consider eco-friendly options that use recycled materials. Light fixtures made from recycled aluminum, metal, steel and glass are becoming very popular and easy to find. You can also look for copper light fixtures; copper is 100% recyclable and is very long lasting.

Water Fixtures

The less water you use the more green you are. When adding or replacing water fixtures look for low flow options; both sink faucets and shower heads come in low flow varieties and each uses less water but maintains a strong stream. Also look into dual flush toilets. These have two flushing options, low or high gallon (usually .8 and 1.6 gallons), that you can choose between depending on your flushing needs.

Projects for your home's heating and cooling:

The U.S. Department of Energy says the average U.S. household's heating and cooling system accounts for more than 50% of the U.S.'s energy use. If you're interested in bringing that percentage down, consider these changes:

Look Up

If the thought or cost of replacing your HVAC system scares you – look to your ceilings. Ceiling fans are still a great option for reducing your energy bill, and your heating and cooling needs. Consider installing EnergyStar ceiling fans in a couple key rooms. Then, in the summer open your windows and run the fan to stir up the air and create a slight breeze. This will help minimize your need for the A/C. If you choose a fan with a reverse cycle, in the winter you can then switch the rotation of the fan blades and send the rising warm air down to help heat the room and reduce your need to run the furnace.

Furnaces & Air Conditioning

As with your other household appliances, if you need to replace an existing furnace or air conditioning unit, look for high-efficiency models. All furnaces are now rated with an Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency (AFUE) rating. The minimum AFUE rating is 78% and goes up– the higher the rating the more efficient the furnace. A/C units are now given a Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating (SEER) to rank their efficiency. The higher the SEER number the more efficient the unit is; the most efficient A/C units have a SEER number between 15 and 17.

Heat Pumps

If you're building a new home, consider an alternative to the traditional furnace and air conditioning units – the heat pump. There are two main types of heat pumps, including geothermal and air-source. Geothermal heat pumps are installed below the ground and use the earth's temperature to heat and cool your home. Air-source pumps are installed above ground, with one compressor inside your home and the other outside, and they heat and cool your home by heat transfer. Each type of heat pump has different models to choose from as well as system requirements, so you'll want to do your research to find out which one is right for you. Heat pumps in general are typically more expensive to purchase and install than a furnace or air conditioning unit; however, they have low maintenance and operating costs and have a large return on investment overall. In addition, most models don't use any fossil fuels.

Smart Thermostats

If you're not yet in the market for a new heating and cooling system, but would like to save money on monthly energy costs, install a smart thermostat. Smart, or programmable, thermostats allow you to set what temperature you want on which day and at what time, and then forget about it. By having your thermostat automatically turn the heat down or the air up when you're sleeping or away from home, allows you to save energy and money. Just be sure to choose a smart thermostat with an **EnergyStar label**.

For the complete RE/MAX Smart Series, visit **SoldSignBlog.com/SmartSeries.**

Green Greenery

Are you interested in bringing some environmentally friendly ideas into your garden and landscaping projects?

Here are 7 ideas to make your green space greener:

1. Choose Native Plants
Plants that are naturally found in your location are already used to the climate and will require less water and maintenance.

2. Grow Edible Plants
Growing fruits or vegetables to eat will save you money at the grocery store and help you become more self-sustaining.

3. Plant Deciduous Trees
The leaves they sport in the summer months will create shade and reduce you're A/C needs while the bare branches in winter will allow the sunlight through and reduce some heating needs.

4. Plant Evergreens
Plant a number of evergreens in a row and they'll help block strong winter winds.

5. Collect Rain Water
Install a rain barrel under your spout to collect and store rain water runoff then use the water on your native plants.

6. Use Electric or Reel Lawn Mowers
Reduce your need for gas by using one of these fossil-fuel-free options.

7. Avoid Chemicals
Certain fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides are poisonous and can harm humans, pets and wildlife.

Three Things to Think About:

Burnt out Bulb?

Next time you go to replace a burnt out light bulb consider it a great time to make the switch to Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFL). They use less energy, last ten times longer, and have come a long way from their beginnings; they now come in an assortment of sizes, styles, and light release options including soft white, daylight and bright white.

Planning to Paint?

If you're getting ready to paint a room, consider investing in VOC-free (volatile organic compound-free) paints. It'll cost a couple dollars more for this chemical-free paint but it'll be worth it in the long run. VOCs have been linked to ozone and smog issues as well as respiratory illnesses and memory impairment.

Evaluate your Electronics!

Do you have a bunch of cords constantly plugged-in yet not used very often? Consider purchasing a "smart" power strip with Auto Shutoff Sensors. These updated power strips recognize when your electronics are in sleep mode and shut the power off to them, eliminating invisible energy consumption.

Return on Investments

A Return on Investment (ROI) is a simple financial evaluation which, in regards to your eco-friendly home improvements or additions, helps you figure out what percentage of your original costs you'll get back. The Master ROI report at **GREENandSAVE.com** shows that a number of small tune-ups provide the best yearly ROIs; but you'll see plenty of returns with some major remodels as well. Here are a few projects you might want to consider (remember, they won't only help your wallet, they'll help the environment too!):

Tune-Ups

Programmable Thermostats

Water Heater Blanket and Pipe Wrap

Low-flow Showerheads

Remodels

Insulation

Windows

To see the complete list of projects and ROIs, visit **GREENandSAVE.com**

Green Certifications

Have you decided that you want to incorporate some eco-friendly changes into your home, but that you don't want to complete the remodel yourself? If so, consider hiring a contractor that's Green Certified. Being certified a green contractor means they've gone through extensive training and are very familiar with sustainable building practices and environmentally friendly products, manufacturers, and installation techniques.

Here's a list of certifications and designations to look for when hiring your professional contractor:

- **Certified Green Professional (CGP)**
  Offered by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)
- **Green Certified Professional (GCP)**
  Offered by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI)
- **Green Contractors Certification**
  Offered by the Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC)
- **LEED for Homes (Leadership of Energy and Environmental Design)**
  Offered by the U.S. Green Business Council (USGBC)
- **Regreen** *Offered by the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID)*
- **GreenAdvantage** *Offered by GreenAdvantage*