

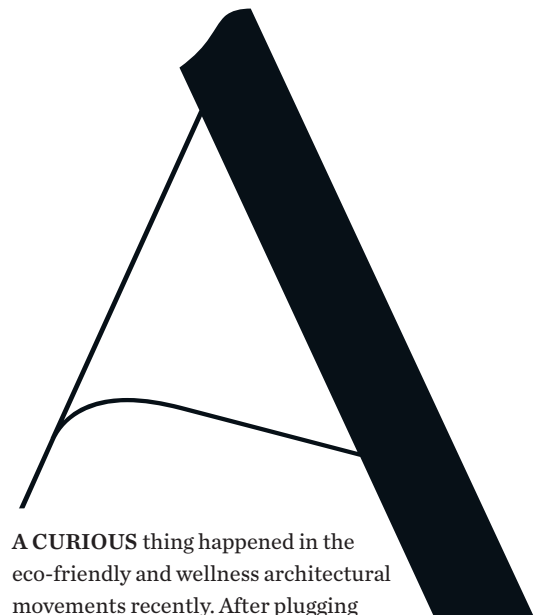
GOING

Architects BriggsKnowles A+D designed this curved, cedar-wrapped passive house in the Catskills to run on electricity powered mostly by solar panels. With prefab shell and roof panels, it was assembled in just two weeks.

GREEN

Wellness and sustainability are the new cornerstones in real estate.

by *Bill Van Parys*



A CURIOUS thing happened in the eco-friendly and wellness architectural movements recently. After plugging away independently for years as niche concepts with their own certifications (LEED and WELL), the two converged and became not just mainstream but major. Suddenly, “environmental wellness” and “sustainability” have become the hottest buzzwords in real estate.



Maestri Studio designed Chanoyu House in Dallas to frame treetop views. Green features include solar panels, rainwater harvesting, a Tesla home battery/vehicle-charging station, and a grass driveway.



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—Eddie Maestri, Maestri Studio
and Maestri Gallery, Dallas

◀ S9 Architecture's
vision for 725
Ponce, an office
and retail space in
Atlanta, included
terraced gardens
that extended the
existing green
space.

What’s causing the green wave? A “perfect storm” of forces, according to John Clifford of S9 Architecture in New York. Consumers were already leaning toward eco-friendly brands and sustainable products. Companies were responding to the wellness craze with strategies like improving indoor air quality and adding recharge rooms with comfy seating and healthy snacks. Then news coverage sparked widespread concern over climate change, which combined with hyperawareness of health and stress during the pandemic. Naturally, these trends spilled into residential real estate design and renovation, giving rise to a multitude of innovations meant to improve health and happiness.

For today’s luxury buyers, sustainable and wellness elements are a top priority, says Eddie Maestri of Maestri Studio and Maestri Gallery in Dallas.

In fact, according to the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) 2022 Trends Report, “Health and wellness continue to dominate both residential and commercial design. Sustainability has also shifted from a nice-to-have to a must-have for designers and consumers alike.”

RETHINKING OUR SPACES

As a result of spending huge amounts of time in our houses and apartments during quarantine, “we have re-created the home as our mental-wellness refuge,”

Maestri says. Imaginative architects, designers, and homeowners are radically reinventing their ideas about what building materials they choose and how to use spaces in the home.

Topping Maestri’s clients’ wish list is a yearning for “separation—ways to escape daily stress.” He helps them achieve this through yoga and meditation areas; home gyms; exercise, sauna, and steam rooms; spa-like “wellness” bathrooms; and prayer rooms.

An even more important driver is “the desire to blur

Arkin Tilt
Architects designed
this home in the
Eastern Sierras
with living sod roofs
atop the garage
and the guest wing
to blend into the
landscape.



the lines between indoors and out” at home, he says. For example, a home might feature floor-to-ceiling windows or sliding glass doors that draw the eye to the landscape. This indoor/outdoor aesthetic might be enhanced with wood or stone flooring that flows from outdoor to indoor spaces separated by glass doors in order to connect them visually.

At the same time, home offices are becoming smaller and more private, but having a pleasing view has become paramount, Maestri adds.

MATERIAL MATTERS

When it comes to building a new home or updating an existing home, “green” features range from passive solar design (which uses sunlight to help with heating and

This Catskills passive house features dynamic, open living spaces. At the top of the stairs, a large playroom opens to the living area below.



“The most significant trend emerging right now is renewed interest in authenticity.”

—Anni Tilt, Arkin Tilt Architects, Berkeley, CA

Adaptive reuse guided S9 Architecture in reimagining this 19th-century warehouse as a creative workplace that showcases views of the Brooklyn waterfront.



cooling) to using eco-friendly paints, installing energy-efficient appliances, and including repurposed bricks or beams.

“The most significant trend emerging right now is renewed interest in authenticity—what things are as opposed to what they look like—because it ties the rest together,” says Anni Tilt, of ecological planning and design firm Arkin Tilt Architects in Berkeley, California. Arkin Tilt was founded 25 years ago on the principle that “caring about your own wellness and that of the planet are two threads of the same narrative.”

Why does authenticity matter? “Embodied carbon—carbon being spent during construction—is more critical to addressing climate change than energy performance. Construction materials can be extraordinarily carbon-intensive, or they can be the opposite,” says Tilt. “Rapidly renewable biogenic materials like straw, hemp, mushrooms, and bamboo [can] store carbon while still being durable and high-performing, all while adding authentic character and a sense of craft.

“This has the potential to be a period of great creativity when we reinvent how we build to bring delight, meaning, and beauty into our built environment,” Tilt says.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY S9 ARCHITECTURE; PIPPA DRUMMOND





Stark Architecture designed this passive house in British Columbia with wood-fiber insulation, windows surpassing passive house standards, and underground tanks that collect and treat rainwater for household use.

EMA PETER