



# Green Building Progress in the Southeast: Part 1

Published on 20 Apr 2012

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Take a seat. Lose your stereotypes. Grab a few hush puppies and a glass of sweet tea. Here's a few highlights you may have otherwise missed about how energy efficiency and green building is moving forward in the Southeast.

Part One: Mainstreet Green in Music City

The [Nashville Ledger](#) reports today: "when it comes to new houses, green is the new granite." Healthy, high-performance homes in Middle Tennessee are not only in high demand, they are emerging as part of homebuyers' minimum expectations. The Ledger cites estimates that builders are supplying approximately one third of new residential construction starts with a green building label. The Volunteer State is home to more than 1,000 homes that are participating in the LEED for Homes program, including 246 that are already certified, 199 (or 80 percent) of which are designated as affordable.

Green buildings and green homes are generally designed to create comfortable, healthy indoor environments that reduce our impact on the environment while saving energy, water and money. The City of Nashville sees a further benefit of one of the less frequently applied green building methods to reduce the strain on both Metro Nashville's combined sewer system and also the Cumberland River.

Yesterday the City's Metro Water Services [proposed an incentive](#) to help offset the cost of building green roofs in Metro Nashville. The proposed ordinance would offer a five-year credit against monthly sewer charges equal to \$10/sq. ft. of eligible green roof space. The proposal is justified by citing the plain and simple facts: that green roofs will "reduce and slow the volume of Stormwater runoff," which will not only "lead to savings in operational costs associated with storing, pumping and treating combined sewage," but also "prevent flooding of storm sewers and overflows in combined sewer systems."

It's important that the Water Services Department of the City of Nashville and Davidson County made this proposal, given the very measurable benefits to water management that green roofs provide - especially in urban environments. What's even more compelling is that the proposal goes on to acknowledge the many benefits of green roofs extend well beyond the department's scope.

The proposed ordinance goes on to say: "Green roofs can offer other benefits to the urban environment, as well...Reduce heating and cooling costs; reduce the heat island effect and improve air quality; provide fire retardation; extend roof life; reduce noise; add habitat for plants and animals; [and] add beauty and space." Green buildings can employ dozens of these technologies, designs and strategies that provide a healthy diversity of benefits that are often overlooked. (Learn more about green roofs [here](#)).

The [Middle Tennessee Chapter](#) of USGBC works closely with the city, businesses and the public to connect the many inter-related benefits of green homes and buildings not only to the increasingly savvy homeowner, but to commercial building owners who increasingly connect with the [business case for LEED](#). Importantly in today's still sluggish economy, especially in the Southeast, growth in those two sectors combined means [jobs, jobs, jobs](#).

In April of 2010, Mayor Dean established a goal of making Nashville the greenest city in the Southeast. The mayor's vision for a [greener Nashville](#) is well under way, making key investments in not only building energy efficiency for homeowners, but also open spaces, a public bicycle program, urban agriculture and more. What good news can we expect next?



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