



# The Blog



## Health and Financial Benefits No Homeowner Can Live Without: Biophilia

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A recent report published by [Terrapin Bright Green](#) entitled, [The Economics of Biophilia: Why Designing with Nature in Mind Makes Financial Sense](#) explores some of the amazing financial and health benefits humans can achieve when they design their homes, offices, and communities to mimic nature. Biophilia, which is the attraction we humans have to nature, is the concept behind their report, and Terrapin's philosophy is that by incorporating low-cost and free biophilic design elements, building owners can reap sound financial returns.

First, consider the physiological impacts contact with nature has on humans. Stress, which is a primary cause of all kinds of human maladies, including cardiovascular disease, psychiatric disorders, and even cancer, can be significantly decreased when we're permitted to spend time in the natural world:


- Lowers salivary cortisol (the stress hormone) by up to 15.8%.
- Reduces pulse rate by up to 6%.
- Turns down blood pressure.
- Increases overall parasympathetic activity (feelings of relaxation) by 56.1%.
- Decreases overall sympathetic activity (feelings of stress) by 19.4%.
- Lowers blood glucose levels in non-insulin-dependent diabetics by 39.7%.

Obviously there are major health benefits to being around nature. It stands to reason, then, that built environments that mimic or include nature would also have a positive impact on human health and financial returns, and studies have shown this to be true:

- Prospective homeowners will pay 58% more for a property with a view of the water and 127% more for lakefront property.
- Green buildings experience 52% fewer felonies, with 7% to 8% of that effect as a result of having access to nature.
- Communities with access to nature spend 10% less on medications for ADD and ADHD.

- When classrooms have natural daylighting rather than artificial lighting, children progress through the curricula up to 26% faster.
- 10% of all workplace absenteeism rates for companies are attributable to a lack of nature in the workplace.
- Hospital patients with views of nature have stays 8.5% shorter than those without.
- Prices in retail stores are 25% higher when businesses are surrounded by nature because consumers regard them more worthy of elevated prices.





Study after study reinforces the principle that nature enhances human quality of life, productivity, and overall wellbeing. So how do we apply this concept? What kinds of elements do biophilic building designs include?

Start by incorporating nature in space, which may mean using potted plants, flowing water, indoor gardens, aquariums, and animals to add natural, dynamic features to your indoor space. Of course, ensuring your outdoor spaces and views are bursting with nature will also help.

Then consider natural analogues, which are those elements in a building's design that evoke nature. This might include such things as natural materials like wood and water, furniture and artwork that evoke natural shapes, and other elements that stimulate our senses with touches, smells, sights, and sounds of nature.

Finally, a green home design may include "nature of the space," which is similar to natural analogues, but goes more to spatial organization similar to nature. This might include elevated views, open spaces, protected spaces, and so forth.

Clearly every homeowner should think about how biophilia can improve not only their sense of vitality and productivity, but also how nature may boost a home's value. How have you incorporated nature in your home? What creative biophilic methods have you used and what benefits have you achieved as a result? Comments welcome.

Images via Flickr [tedkerwin](#) and [Terrapin Bright Green](#).



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