Broad themes:

- Reuse and repurposing – Old buildings retrofitted to work better, construction debris patchworked into new buildings, other stuff like maybe parts of cars taken from their original context and repurposed into a new one. An existing building represents a lot of embodied carbon, the resources spent to extract/refine it's materials, transport them, build it, maintain it, etc, and that extends to most existing machines, devices, infrastructure, etc.
- Plants in practical, non-danaging locations, especially if they provide additional shelter, cooling, food etc
- Variety – solarpunk buildings should be built to fit their environment – what's practical, energy efficient, and even what materials are locally available will depend on where the scene is set. Our current society, with its wealth of fuel and concrete, tends to drop the same cookie-cutter building into every climate and just burn more fuel to heat or cool it rather than adapt the design to its surroundings. Solarpunk would have to look very different in the desert than in a temperate rainforest, or a prairie.
- Communal spaces. Third places where people can exist without having to buy something. Parks, common areas, libraries of all kinds, cafeterias, speakers corners, playgrounds etc. solarpunk architecture should feel like it exists for its community.
- Accessibility, whether that's ramps, signage, a lack of curbs, abundant seating, or any of a thousand other considerations.
- Local power generation – photovoltaic panels are common in solarpunk art, but there are tons of other options that use energy directly in the form we receive it, like solar steam generators (which can run steam engines/generators, as well as produce steam for industrial purposes, solar furnaces, solar ovens, windmills, even waterwheels could make sense based on location. Anaerobic Biogas Generation from sewage (turning a sewage treatment or composting biproduct into usable gas and reducing greenhouse gas emissions) is also a good one, and has those distinctive domes.
- A de-emphasis on car infrastructure. It'll still need some vehicle access, for emergency services, heavy items transportation, and accessibility, but elements that make it more walkable, and even stuff like bike racks, are huge. Perhaps some mixed use buildings with shops or co-ops on the ground floors can help there too.
- Art, murals and decorations. Our current society tends to treat standardized ways most stuff is apparently 'supposed' to look. Whenever I see graffiti or buildings painted in some elaborate pattern or image, I'm kinda delighted. I'd hope a solarpunk society would abandon some of the home owner association-type standardization and would decorate everything from buildings to machines, in all kinds of styles. That might mean folk art with historical roots, like the zapista murals, it might mean carved panels on cabinets, or etchings on tools, metal sculpture, or who knows what. Embellishment not for commercial value but as self expression and messaging. So the topics and content would vary a lot. I think there's a bit of punk in that, in refusing to paint or decorate with an eye on the resale value, like your house is a product for others rather than your own home.

Okay, on to my actual list (I've grouped these by theme/location):

In cities/towns:

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  Maintainable buildings (usually 4 stories or less, unless
using/maintaining old skyscrapers)
  Repurposed buildings:
      Malls,
      Parking garages,
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Gas station, maybe turned into a restaurant with outdoor dining under the canopy?

Public transit in use: trains, streetcars, ropeways/cableways overhead, buses, water buses in canals and rivers (Bangkok has some great examples)

Bicycles/non-car personal transportation

Roads reclaimed into:

gardens

speakers corners

playgrounds

communal kitchens

parks (maybe with some solar cooker grills, the kind with a parabolic dish underneath, which can swing/flip up over the grilltop when not in use)

any other third space

Public gardens, if doing plants on rooftops/balconies, consider practicality/whether they'd cause damage or become a hazard (falling trees kill people even without blowing off the roof of a skyscraper).

Lots of public art

Street musicians

Renewable power sources where practical – ie, solar on rooftops but windmills will probably be set up outside of town

Emergency Vehicles that fit pedestrianized streets

Amphibious Emergency Vehicles where seasonal flooding is expected

Cities built to survive flooding

Possibly some neighborhoods which are transplanted from cities that may not do well as climate change worsens (little New Orleans?)

Old wind turbine blades repurposed into bike shelters, foot bridges, picnic tables, and other things.

Reduce light pollution – there are tradeoffs here so how you balance them will depend on your goals. Light pollution harms wildlife and humans and uses energy. At the same time, well-lit streets increase safety, both from other humans and hazards, and basically help facilitate a functional nightlife, which is often an aspect of a thriving city.

The basics:

Use streetlights with caps that point downward – a huge ammount of light polution is reduced just by this step

Use redder lights – red light is less bright and better for wildlife, but still gives the same benefits (illusory or otherwise) for safety. It also doesn't interfere with the circadian rhythm. Amber lights are better than white/blue.

A way to improve the feeling of safety is to light the faces of people, so you need lights at least taller than humans if you want them pointing downwards. Uniformity of lighting is also a big part, so multiple small lamps tend to be better than one big one.

Lights that switch off during especially low-traffic times

Consider if all areas of the city need light at the same times, or if some quiet neighborhoods can switch off earlier.

Prioritize lighting certain high-traffic areas, particularly in places with a lot of pedestrians, who might not all have their own lights or may be too inebriated to use them. These might include markets, streets with lots of bars/clubs/other nightlife, plazas, or anywhere people might socialize outdoors at night.

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      Cities with narrow, winding streets with buildings close will confine
the light better than the opposite.
      Curbs and other critical areas could be marked (not illuminated) by
glow-in-the-dark paint or bioluminescent algae or plants.
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