Retrofitting Homes for Energy Savings

By

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Energy efficiency has been a growing topic of interest and continues to evolve as we further understand the impact it has on our lives. Energy efficient is important for numerous reasons from lowering consumers’ energy bills to reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases which have a direct impact on the environmental issues surrounding global warming and fossil fuel depletion.

But what can the average consumer to do help conserve energy and protect the environment? Retrofitting their home to make it more energy efficient is a good place to start.

Evaluating the Energy Efficiency of a Home

The growing practice of energy conservation has also given birth to new businesses that, for a fee, provide an energy analysis and then retrofit consumer’s homes. Using sophisticated equipment, they locate non-energy efficient areas in the home and offer potential solutions, which can be costly depending on the issue. However, there are a few simple evaluations a homeowner can perform without incurring a large bill or requiring a lot of time:

Check for drafts around windows and doors by lighting a match and holding it up to the window. A flickering flame is a good indication a draft is present.

Look for water on the inside of windows, which indicates cool air is leaking into the house.

Examine temperature variability within a room by taking readings in different parts of the room. Temperature variances can be alleviated by simply updating weather stripping.

Simple Ways to Retrofit a Home

After determining the energy efficiency of a home, and correcting some of the more obvious issues, there are still some additional, simple steps that can be taken to reduce energy consumption:

Replace light bulbs with those that are more efficient.

Install water flow restrictors on faucets and shower heads.

Install a programmable thermostat and lower (or raise) the temperature a few degrees.

Weatherproof windows and replace weather stripping.

“One of the quickest and easiest ways to reduce heat loss through windows is to seal air leaks by using caulking and weather stripping. This low-cost, do-it-yourself project can have a positive impact on your heating bills and home comfort.” (Natural Resources Canada 2007) Some more costly improvements include “investing in high-efficiency windows, efficient and thoughtfully placed lighting, and Energy Star-rated appliances will save you energy and money, will not scare off lenders, and may even qualify for tax credits.”

When it comes to retrofitting a home, the possibilities are vast and can be overwhelming. After exploring the possibilities in any given home, the best next step is to develop a plan. “Decide which [projects] you can perform with confidence yourself. Get written proposals from experts for those you don’t plan to do personally. Budget money for the big improvements, and develop a savings plan.” (Dorsi and Krigger 2008, 6)

Energy Savings Does Not Stop at the Home

Saving energy has also expanded outside the home and into businesses around the world. Many companies are doing their part by implementing more energy conscious policies. For example, hotels now ask patrons to use towels and sheets more than once, which enables the hotel to cut down on daily water and energy consumption. “A good portion of the hot water used at an institutional building is devoted to washing dishes in the kitchen and washing clothes in the laundry.”

Energy efficiency is a world-wide concern that impacts us all. But by retrofitting homes, and even businesses, consumers can see an immediate, positive impact to their wallet and the environment in which they live.