

GOING GREEN WITH AN Older Home

living spaces

Courtesy of **Amy Lauerhass**, Bexley resident, owner of Lauerhass Architecture

As we think about sustainable living, “going green” can mean many different things. Most people have heard the terms LEED or Energy Star when referring to environmentally-friendly design. These programs, and others, are great ways to assure energy efficiency in a structure. However, they also can be time-consuming, cumbersome, and very expensive to implement. Because of these issues, they are not always feasible for residential renovation projects. Below is a sensible, pragmatic approach that can

be implemented over time, as your budget allows.

Design of Efficient Space: This is the first step, and the most important. It is absolutely essential to use sound design principles when beginning a renovation or addition project. I always stress the quality of space over the quantity. I want to design space that is



utilized by the entire family on a regular basis—space that has good flow, is multi-functional, and is only as large as it needs to be.

Ceiling Insulation: Traditional systems use fiberglass batt insulation to create a barrier between a conditioned space and a potentially very hot or very cold roof structure. Have you checked your attic space lately? Is there insulation there? Is it effective? Options are available such as fiberglass, blown cellulose or sprayed-on closed cell foam.

New Window Selection: This can be a confusing topic, but no matter what brand name is chosen, require a window with low-emissivity (Low-E) glass, a coating that controls heat transfer through windows. Also stipulate that the insulated space between the two panes of glass be filled with argon gas. These options are available in a wide variety of brands and budgets.

Major Appliances: Any new appliance you buy should be Energy Star-rated. Devices carrying the Energy Star logo, such as kitchen appliances, washers and dryers, generally use 20–30% less energy than their predecessors.

Plumbing Fixtures: Does your toilet run occasionally? Is it old and therefore uses many gallons of water to flush? Consider buying new low-flow toilets, which have been developed to save substantial amounts of water compared to conventional fixtures.

Heating and Cooling: The equipment that heats and cools your home is vital to your comfort. Any new system needs to be energy

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efficient, but it also needs to be sized correctly and placed correctly in your home. Make sure you use a reputable company that has the knowledge and experience for these three components.

Light Bulbs: This is an idea that can be very easily incorporated into any size project. CFLs and LEDs are now readily available, and also can be dimmable. Although this type of bulb is more expensive than a typical incandescent bulb, it uses 75% less energy and lasts 6–10 times as long. So although the initial investment is greater, the life cycle costs are significantly less.

Hot Water: After heating and cooling, water heating is typically the largest energy user in the home because it is necessary for so many activities. Consult an expert for the best solution for your home – whether it is an energy efficient tank heater, a tankless instantaneous water heating system, or a hybrid.

Thermostat: This is an easy, inexpensive way to achieve greater energy efficiency. Programmable thermostats can improve comfort and save money by automatically setting the thermostat at different levels for different times of the day and week. Furthermore, there is no wasting of resources by heating and cooling the home when the homeowner is not present.

As a homeowner, you can implement any number of these highly effective measures to create homes, even older homes, that are more environmentally friendly and energy efficient.