

Cut Costs, Improve Efficiency

Learn How Renovating Your House Can Save You Money

If you think you've been paying too much for electricity, you're not alone. Brent Paquin, owner of Paquin Design Build, says that now is a good time to cut back on energy bills and make homes more environmentally friendly, but remodeling can be expensive. Luckily, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, signed by President Obama on Feb. 17, 2009, encourages homeowners to update their homes with energy efficient measures for a tax credit. The tax credit for remodeling projects is 30 percent of the cost of the work, or up to \$1,500 (see sidebar).

Many older homes built in the '60s and '70s may be drafty, and homeowners might also be ready to update look of their home. Newer homes shouldn't be excluded as they may require energy efficiency improvements. Here's a checklist *Taste of the Bay* compiled with the help of Paquin Design Build of ways to improve your home's efficiency.

Insulation

Make sure you have proper insulation throughout your home. Look for areas where wires enter the house, and be sure they are closed off using sealing foam. Also check the wall that separates your garage from your house: there is often a gap between this wall and the garage floor. This gap may look small, but it's a major culprit for heat loss, and sealing it with caulk is an easy and inexpensive solution.

For an insulation overhaul, companies such as Paquin Design Build can remove the outer finishing from your house and blow in insulation from the outside. Paquin also suggests upgrading to Energy Star-rated windows. Add new siding to the improvements and you've just updated your home's look and efficiency at once.

HVAC

Even with the best insulation, you can spend a lot of money and energy on heating and cooling if your HVAC system is too small for your home. If the HVAC system is undersized, it will work harder than it normally should, which is a waste of energy, and it still might not keep your whole home comfortable. Paquin suggests adding a second system and gives the example of a house in which the original system covers only the basement and first floor while the new system covers the 2nd floor—known as dual zone HVAC.



BEFORE



AFTER

Accomplish two things at once by adding blown insulation when replacing siding.

Proper sealing also applies to the HVAC system. You may need to replace duct work to be sure it's not leaking.

Water Heater

Older water heaters work all day to keep water warm even when no one needs it, but new tankless water heaters heat water instantly as it runs through the system. This saves

energy and has the added benefit of never running out of hot water. Paquin says he installed a tankless water heater for a household of seven. With that many people trying to shower each day, an old fashioned water heater was inconvenient, since it could only heat a

limited amount of water at a time. The tankless heater was a more practical and efficient option for this household.

Lighting

Don't forget the simple things like natural lighting. Make the most of your windows on sunny days by keeping the curtains or blinds open, and for areas that require electric lighting, consider using motion sensors, dimmers and timers. Paquin says some parents are using timers for their children's closet lights, since most people don't need to leave a closet light on all day, and it saves parents the trouble of constantly checking switches.

The photos used in this piece are from an actual project of Paquin Design Build.

For more information on these or other home improvements, please call **410.643.7811** or visit **www.paquindesignbuild.net**. Paquin Design Build specializes in drafting and design, custom homes, additions and renovations. MHIC #90045, MHBR #5346.

Get Tax Credit for Remodel

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1. Visit www.energystar.gov
2. Enter 'tax credit' in the search box
3. Click on first returned link, "Federal Tax Credits."