



Green to Green: Cheap Energy Efficiency Upgrades to Raise Your Property Value

By Kandy Harris

Insulation and Windows

Adding more insulation and sealing up outer walls can be one of the easiest, cheapest and most effective means of beefing up your home's energy efficiency, according to [ENERGY STAR](#). Even if you skip putting insulation in the walls (which can be difficult to do), "One of the most cost-effective energy savers is insulated window treatments, which keep cold air out and warm air in—or vice versa," explained Joanne Cleaver of [US Realty](#). "Insulated shades, blinds and drapes are most effective on the east and west sides of the house, where you can capture the morning and afternoon sun and lock in the warmth." Speaking of windows and other openings into your house, check them all to make sure there's no leakage. If there is, seal them up. Not sure how to find leaks? Call a specialist. They'll bring in the [cool equipment](#) to find them for you.

Ceiling Fans and Shade Trees

Not only do ceiling fans look great, they also reduce summer cooling costs, since they keep air moving without having to crank the AC all day long. Planting shade trees and shrubs will also keep your home shielded from direct sunlight on hot summer days, and they offer privacy if your property is located on a street with lots of close neighbors and traffic. "[Trees, shrubs, and vines] that thrive in the intense heat of the east and southern exposures can provide shade and cool in the summer," Joanne explained, "while letting in more sun during the winter." Extra bonus: They add curb appeal.

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Appliances

Swapping old appliances with energy-efficient ones will certainly

appeal to buyers, because they know they'll end up saving on energy bills every month. However, shelling out for brand new appliances definitely falls within the "pricey" category. According to Joanne, however, replacing your current hot water heater with a solar model could pay off in the end. "A solar hot water system can trim down heating and electricity costs," she said. Additionally, tankless hot water heaters are less expensive and can still result in big savings. Joanne advises homeowners to "run a 'before and after' cost comparison to document the savings."

Save Your Receipts

Joanne offered a helpful piece of advice when it comes to making energy efficient upgrades to your home prior to putting it on the market: When it's time to sell, be sure to translate the energy-efficient upgrades into the monthly cost savings." She continued: "Real estate agents and lenders tend to focus on the total selling price, but home buyers realize that it's the monthly carrying cost that is the most important number. That number includes taxes, fees, commuting expenses, insurance and utilities. When you can prove that your improvements actually reduce monthly expenses of homeownership, you have a compelling and relevant negotiation platform."

Well said, Joanne. Happy Earth Day to one and all.

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