

Trends

In Sustainable Remodeling

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By the end of the 2011 International Builders Show (IBS), it seemed apparent that green building and remodeling had essentially stolen the show, as evidenced by the quantity and quality of innovative green products exhibited as well as attendance rates at green educational seminars. In a nutshell: The green building movement has gone mainstream, shedding its long-held cult status as a fringe group of “tree huggers.”

Remodeling, and more specifically green remodeling, is expected to be the top building trend in 2011. The reasons are many. Studies show homeowners have lost interest in “trading up,” hence they are staying put and have a keen desire to remodel their existing homes to

reflect how they live today. Homeowners will continue to take advantage of local, state and federal incentives to weatherize and upgrade inefficient homes. Additionally, builders and consumers alike are firmly grasping the importance and benefits of green design and construction. It is about health and safety, it’s about comfort, it’s about community and it’s about value.

So what emerging trends lie on the horizon?

Get Audited

IRS agents need not apply because we are talking home-performance audits (a.k.a. energy audits). A whole-home audit can reveal potential inefficiencies in a home’s energy and water consumption, such as leaky toilets or

faucets, high-flow plumbing fixtures, as well as energy-inefficient appliances, heating systems or lighting fixtures, which translates into wasted dollars and resources.

Home performance audits come in two basic flavors: assessments and deep energy audits. Assessments take approximately two hours to complete and include a visual inspection of the home’s energy systems, installation of instant energy-saving measures (such as CFL lights and low-flow shower heads), a review of the homeowners’ goals and a short, prioritized list of the most cost-effective home improvements the homeowners can make. Assessments are conducted by energy auditors certified by the Building Performance Institute (BPI).

A deep energy audit includes a blower door test, a duct blasting test, infrared imaging of the home’s envelope, analysis of the home’s annual energy consumption and more. It quantifies the amount of energy being lost by leaky windows, doors and duct work, as well as assessing the size and output of the home’s heat and hot water systems along with the potential energy savings from recommended energy-efficient home improvements.

These audits are conducted by BPI certified energy auditors and can take half a day or more. At the end of a deep energy audit, the auditor will typically provide the homeowner with a list of energy-saving home improvement suggestions and often times a list of

2011 International Builders Show



qualified contractors to complete the work. Typical improvements would be adding insulation, sealing duct work, replacing inefficient heating/cooling equipment, air sealing and more.

There are many programs providing homeowners with financial assistance (rebates, tax credits, financing, etc.) to cover the cost of assessments, deep energy audits and energy retrofits. Two handy websites to access information on programs are: the U.S. Department of Energy's website called the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiencies at www.dsireusa.org and the National Home Performance Council at www.nhpci.org (read the "Residential Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programs in the U.S." study by NHPCI under the Press & Events link, Dec. 15, 2010 news).

Kitsap County, Puget Sound Energy residential customers whose sole source of heating is electric are eligible for free assessments while deep energy audits and energy home improvements may be eligible for rebates (certain conditions apply). For more information go to <http://pse.com/savingsandenergycenter/ForHomes/Pages/Rebates-and-Offers.aspx>

Kitsap County is overseeing the Kitsap Green Weatherization Program, which provides rebates for deep energy audits and assists with financing for energy home improvements. For more information, contact Autumn Salamack, resource conversation manager for Kitsap County, at 360.337-5670 or asalamack@co.kitsap.wa.us.

RePower Bainbridge is a grant-funded program on Bainbridge Island that provides free assessments, deep energy audits (rebates are available if a prescribed portion of the energy saving measures are completed by a certified professional) for Bainbridge Island residents regardless of the type of fuel source they use for heating. For more information go to www.bienergychallenge.org/drupal1/repowerbainbridge.

Cascade Natural Gas customers can go to www.cngc.com/conservation/conservation_residential_washington.asp to find incentives and rebates.



Hand Held Shower
by Bio-Tech, Inc.

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Kitsap Credit Union is instituting a financing program to help homeowners finance energy home improvement projects; for more information go to www.kitsapcu.org.

Blue is the New Green

As snow packs and reservoir levels experience dramatic declines and draught conditions beyond historic norms, water conservation is now considered as critical as energy conservation. Additionally, homeowners have finally come to appreciate the environmental and cost relationship between water consumption and energy consumption.

First, it takes lots of energy to transport and filter water as well as treat waste water and second, there is a measurable

expense associated with heating hot water for use in high-usage plumbing fixtures and home appliances. If builders and homeowners select low-flow fixtures and appliances (and there are plenty of attractive and affordable models available), they can reduce the home's water consumption, energy consumption and carbon emissions.

In addition to the Energy Star program, the Environmental Protection Agency developed the WaterSense program. It is similar to Energy Star in that it certifies products that use 20 percent less water than the federal mandate for similar products. To see a list of manufacturers and models or to find rebate information, go to www.epa.gov/WaterSense.



Fixed Showerhead
by Bio-Tech, Inc.

Local water utilities and municipalities have been incentivizing water conservation home improvements such as low-flow plumbing fixtures (faucets, shower heads and toilets) as well as low water usage appliances (dishwashers and clothes washers). To see a list of state-by-state energy-efficiency rebates and tax credits go to www.dsireusa.org.

Good Design Is Good Business

Another standout from the 2011 IBS was the concept of good design. This may seem like common sense but attendance levels at design seminars at this year's show shattered previous year's numbers. For remodelers, good design is good business as measured by greater homeowner satisfaction and fewer callbacks. The days of "build bigger" have been replaced by "build better" and the best way to do that is with good design and thoughtful material selection that emphasizes comfort and resource efficiency (both monetary and natural).

A Second Lease on Life

Vintage dresses have been haute couture on the red carpets of Hollywood for years and now we are finding vintage is all the rage in home remodel projects. More remodel projects are starting with deconstruction (the methodical dismantling of a structure to ensure maximum salvage of usable building materials) rather than demolition. As a result, projects are being finished with salvaged wood flooring and millwork, antique dressers are being converted to bathroom vanities with period-specific sinks and faucets, and dated kitchen cabinetry is becoming useful storage in garages and basements. This trend saves natural resources and often time money while providing builders and homeowners with fun bragging rights.

There are many things to consider when remodeling a home, whether you choose to go green or not. At the very top of the list is design and planning. Good design and thoughtful planning is green because it will ensure greater satisfaction in the finished project, effectively diminishing replacements while reducing material usage, which ultimately saves money — doubling your green!