

Green technology not just for new houses

Older home certified 'green' after renovations

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New homes aren't the only ones to benefit from energy-efficient practices and materials.

A 40-plus-year-old home on

Denese Drive recently was certified "green" by the National Association of Homebuilders.

On Saturday, a Green Transformation Seminar and Open House will introduce the public to the methods and means used in the project.

The three main improvements were to interior air quality, energy-efficiency and safety.

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Kelley McCully/News Tribune

Ken Thoenen talks about green improvements that can be retrofitted to existing homes at a home on Denese Drive.

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The house at 4707 Denese Drive was acquired as a foreclosure and then was transformed into a low-energy home.

"Not only is it a revitalization for the home, but an improvement for the neighborhood," said Ken Thoenen, chairman of the local Home Builders Association's green committee.

Most of the "green" features are not noticeable, like the crushed glass countertops or the fireproof wall.

"You don't want them to stand out like a sore thumb," said Sandy Clink, a real estate agent. "You want them to just blend in."

The most costly part of the project was steps taken toward energy efficiency, including identifying air leaks, adding insulation and testing electric outlets, Clink said.

"People don't realize how much heat they lose through electrical switches, floor boards, windows and outlets,"

CHECK IT OUT

A Green Transformation Seminar and Open House will be from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday.

The educational seminar will be from 9-10:30 a.m. at the Jacqueline Margaret Community Room, 1119 Big Horn Drive.

The open house is at 4707 Denese Drive, recently certified "green" by the National Association of Homebuilders.

Local experts will discuss incorporating eco-friendly elements into existing homes among other topics and questions visitors might have.

Clink said.

In the kitchen area, the improvements opened up the passive solar opportunities. A "low E glass" window plus an enlarged patio door let in afternoon sun, accented by absorbent ceramic floor tile.

To improve the healthy environment inside the home, a special ventilation system was added to bring in clean air while getting rid of pollutants.

"You must have fresh air," Clink said.

One of the extensive energy-efficiency steps taken for this home was to minimize the air loss and turnover, particularly around wood fireplace flues, wood stove and gas furnace and other such openings.

Foam insulation was added

to the under side of the roof. And outside walls were caulked behind the base and between drywall, around doors, windows, electrical boxes and outside walls.

The air flow at the home was reduced from 4,500-cubic-inches-per-foot to 1,200-cubic inches-per-foot after the "green" measures were installed.

Even the selected carpets, paints and caulking are more allergy-friendly.

"This was transforming a 1970s house into a 2011 home," Clink said. "We want people to understand that when you have an older home, there's still a lot you can do."

Most home owners will not have the opportunity to

address the entire home all at once, as in the case of the Denese Drive home.

Clink said home owners should be aware of environmentally friendly options so as a need arises, choices in materials or methods could be made for a greater "green" result.

Research and paying attention to little things, like air flow, will help homeowners when decisions come, Thoenen said.

The public and homeowners are showing an increased interest in these green options.

"It makes sense, it's not a complicated thing, and they have a vested interest," Thoenen said.

Making environmentally friendly renovation choices probably will be more costly up front than traditional methods. But the savings should be seen in the long-term energy and water bills, personal health and a higher appraised value, too.

"A lot of houses built in the 1970s could benefit from upgrades for safety and environmental quality," Clink said.