

What Green Features Would You Choose?

Consumer interest has grown significantly over the years for homes that offer energy-efficiency and cost-savings — that also have minimal environmental impact on the earth. But will they pay for it?

According to a recent survey of more than 500 builders by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the answer is, not necessarily.

“Although we are seeing significant interest in green building, cost effectiveness is clearly a key concern among home buyers,” said NAHB Chairman Joe Robson, a home builder and developer in Tulsa, Okla. “Builders said that among buyers who are willing to pay more for green features, more than half — 57 percent — are unlikely to pay more than an additional two percent.”

Home owners are feeling the pinch of the recession and are much more careful about their spending choices. They can't afford everything they want to do to green their homes, so they are picking and choosing ways that will provide benefits that also fit into their budgets.

The study also found that preferences for green features tend to vary by region. For instance, home owners in California might be more interested in water efficiency, while people in the Northeast are more concerned about savings on heating costs.

If you would like to incorporate a few green features into your home, it is best to contact a Certified Green Professional (CGP) in your area who can determine the best choices based on where you live. You can find a local green building or remodeling expert by visiting www.nahb.org/designations.

Although it is best to talk to a trained builder or remodeler, here are two quick ways to help you get the best green bang for your buck.

Insulation

Improving the insulation in your attic is one of the easiest ways to realize immediate benefits. Adding insulation will help save energy costs, increase comfort by better controlling temperature, and improve indoor air quality by eliminating many gaps through which dirt, dust, and other impurities can enter. When choosing insulation, the higher the R-grade, the better.

Tankless Water Heaters

Tankless water heaters — which save energy by heating water only when needed — are comparable in cost to traditional gas water heaters but are 30 percent more efficient, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

In addition to the energy savings these two improvements contribute, home owners can see additional savings through tax credits available from Uncle Sam.

The Existing Home Retrofit Tax Credit provides a return of 30 percent of the cost of certain products — such as water heaters and insulation — up to a \$1,500 total cap for 2009 and 2010. Find out more at www.nahb.org/efficiencytaxcredit.

You don't have to do a complete roof to foundation upgrade to make significant energy-efficient improvements to your home.