

# CityHomes

## HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Going green can be easy (and cheap)

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Homeowners planning an addition or renovation are discovering that going green is not only easier than they thought, it's also easy on their bank account.

Going green can be as simple as using better designs, materials and construction techniques to reduce the use of energy, water and building materials, said Lynn Taylor, owner of Taylor Made Plans. Her company creates designs for home renovations and new construction.

Many people are discouraged by the idea that they have to invest in expensive technology, but that's not the case, she said.

"People should not look at geothermal heating and cooling systems or solar panels," Taylor said. "The first thing to do is simply stop heat from leaking from the house in the winter and cool air leaking in the summer."

Homeowners are amazed to learn that they can reduce the amount of energy used to heat and cool their house by 28 percent just by plugging air leaks, said Taylor, citing statistics compiled by Nashville Electric Service.

"You save money every month. Making your home energy efficient is an investment that will grow in value. When you pay too much for electricity and gas, you never get that money back," Taylor said.

Energy efficiency pays off in another way. When the time comes to get rid of your old central air system, you can replace it with a smaller one that costs less to buy and operate, she said.

Water efficiency pays off, too. Plans to raise water rates in Nashville are making tankless water heaters more attractive than ever, Taylor said.

Large, whole-house units eliminate the need for a traditional water heater that keeps a full tank of water hot at all times.

They can be paired with smaller under-sink units that heat



water just before it comes out of the faucet, making it unnecessary to let the water run while you wait for the hot water to get to the tap from the water heater in the basement or garage.

Whether you're **building from scratch** or just upgrading your current home, using high-quality, **energy-efficient materials** make it easy to go green. Spending too much money on **electricity and gas** is cash you never get back.

"You save two ways. You save water and save energy by heating only the water you use," she said.

Another way to be green is to make sure your contractor uses high-quality materials that will last, Taylor said.

"Otherwise you have to come back and repair it in five years, the old materials have to go to the landfill and the homeowner has to pay more," Taylor said.

"LEED building techniques are out of many homeowners' reach," said Taylor, referring to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards set by the U.S. Green Building Council. "But these ideas are in reach." ■