

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

GREEN HOMEBUYING TIPS

With energy bills skyrocketing, demand for environmentally friendly “green” homes has grown. Smart homebuyers know that energy-efficient homes cost less to maintain, and they often provide a more comfortable and healthy living space. But before house-hunting, potential buyers should learn what to look for and ask the right questions, says Kara Saul Rinaldi, executive director of the National Home Performance Council (NHPC). “It’s hard to be a green homebuyer. While we can see solar panels, the vital energy-efficiency information about a home is often hidden behind walls, in ducts, or behind dusty systems,” says Rinaldi. The NHPC suggests buyers ask the following questions when house-hunting:

- *What is the R-value of the attic insulation?* The higher the R-value, the more insulated the home.
- *Is there any insulation within the walls?* Many older homes do not have proper insulation.
- *Are windows double-paned? Are they low-e coated or Energy Star rated?* Poor-quality windows lose up to one-third of a home’s heat during the winter months. The Energy Star rating indicates that the windows are highly efficient for your region.
- *What is the U-factor of the windows?* Look for a U-factor of 0.35 or lower, which reflects the insulation of the entire window, not just the glass.
- *Has the home had an energy audit, or received a HERS rating?* These resources can reveal the level of energy efficiency of the home and how much it will cost to heat and cool the home.
- *What are the utility bills?* A spacious home may be perfect for a growing family, but the energy bills might ruin the monthly budget.

Even if you know what to look for in a green home, a qualified CRS REALTOR® can help you find the answers that will help you make a smart energy choice



A BETTER USE OF SPACE



A growing number of homeowners are focusing on using their home space more efficiently and personalizing it to suit their lifestyle, according to a survey by *Better Homes and Gardens*. More than one-third of homeowners (38 percent) surveyed say they are spending more time planning design changes for their home, up from 33 percent a year ago, while 42 percent say they shop around for more deals and bargains before committing to a project, up from 40 percent in 2011.

Many homeowners are using social media sites such as Pinterest to share design inspirations, product reviews, creative ideas and solutions for using space. Owners say they prefer a home with median square footage of 1,791 square feet, down from 1,846 square feet a year ago. Bonus rooms and media rooms are no longer as popular unless they have a multi-functional purpose.

More than half of homeowners surveyed (55 percent) are focusing their next home improvement project on style upgrades for countertops, flooring, faucets and fixtures, up from 50 percent in 2010. Projects to expand storage space and remodel the bathroom and kitchen also rank high.

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78 percent of home shoppers say they use their mobile devices to view photos and videos of homes for sale.

Source: *The Real Estate Book Home Shoppers Survey, March 2012*



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ENJOY A WORRY-FREE VACATION

Whether you're headed to the beach, to visit relatives, or on a family adventure at a theme park, the last thing you want to worry about is the safety of your home while on vacation. Home inspection company Pillar To Post offers some practical tips to protect your home while you're away.

- Set timers on several lights around the house and schedule them to turn on and off at different times. Timers are inexpensive and can be purchased at most hardware retailers.
- Ask a neighbor to park their car in the driveway occasionally so it appears someone is home.
- Suspend delivery of newspapers and have the post office hold your mail, or have a neighbor collect it. If you'll be gone for more than one week, arrange to have someone mow the lawn in your absence.
- Use caution when communicating on Facebook or other social networks about vacation plans. Information spreads quickly

and could reach the wrong person.

- Turn off the ringer on telephones, so they can't be heard from outside.
- Close window coverings on any ground-level rooms where valuables may be visible from the window.
- Turn the water heater down to its lowest setting. Maintaining the hot water at its everyday temperature during your absence wastes energy and money.
- Unplug appliances and electronics except the refrigerator and freezer.
- To prevent water leaks or a burst hose, turn off the water supply lines for the toilets, sinks and appliances.
- If possible, pack vacation gear in the car while it's in the garage so passersby don't see that you're leaving for vacation.

Once you've taken these steps to protect your home, it'll be easier to relax and enjoy your well-deserved getaway.



Say Yes to CRS

Buying a home is one of the biggest and most emotional decisions you will ever make. So it's important to work with someone who can provide sound advice and a steady, guiding hand when you need it. That's why a CRS agent is the best person for the job.

A Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) is among the top 4 percent of all agents in the country. CRS agents have achieved a high volume of transactions and advanced training in areas such as business planning, real estate investing, marketing and technology. They must also maintain membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and abide by its Code of Ethics. Why work with anyone else when you can work with a CRS agent?



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DID YOU KNOW?

To tell if an egg is raw or hard-cooked, spin it. If it spins easily, the egg is hard-cooked; if it wobbles, it's raw.



Source: Egg Nutrition Center



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

This newsletter is for informational purposes only and should not be substituted for legal or financial advice. If you are currently working with another real estate agent or broker, it is not a solicitation for business.