

## Energy Efficient Home Improvements

Rising energy costs affect every homeowner. If you are planning a home improvement project, it's important to look at ways to incorporate energy efficient changes as well as merely cosmetic ones. The money you invest today can quickly pay for itself with savings on monthly utility costs, and on your mortgage as well.

Of course, it takes money to save money, and energy efficient home improvements do require a certain amount of cash outlay. Even if you don't have the budget on hand, there are options available to you. If you are planning on renewing or refinancing your mortgage, talk to your bank about borrowing a little extra to invest in making your home more energy wise. Energy efficient home improvements will immediately lower your monthly energy bills, and the interest on home equity loans and home mortgages is usually tax deductible.

### Energy Efficient Mortgages

Another good option is to consider an Energy Efficient Mortgage. Owning a car involves real costs like maintenance and operating expenses; the same holds true for a home. Rising utility expenses must be factored into the costs of owning a home. An Energy Efficient Mortgage (EEM) can increase your comfort and save you money whether you are buying, selling, refinancing or remodeling your home. These plans can be applied to most home mortgages, and provide special benefits to borrowers who are buying energy efficient homes or are planning to install energy efficient improvements. Homeowners with lower utility bills have more money in their pocket at the end of each month, and are able to allocate a larger portion of their income to housing expenses.

There are many benefits to financing your energy efficient home improvements through an EEM:

- \* Qualifying for a larger loan amount allows you to purchase a better, more energy efficient home.
- \* You can finance your cost-effective energy saving measures as part of your mortgage.
- \* Older homes can be improved and updated to become more comfortable and efficient
- \* Stretch your debt-to-income qualifying ratio with a loan for energy-efficient homes.
- \* Increase your overall buying power.

### Other Financing Options

Many utility providers and energy-related businesses are now offering loans and incentives for property owners to install energy efficient heating and air conditioning systems, insulation, windows and other energy efficiency improvements. Further, utility companies are beginning to offer a range of improvements to help customers enjoy greater efficiency. In the United States, the Edison Electric Institute (EEI) offers a list of member company programs that offer efficiency services to homeowners, businesses and industrial plants.

More energy efficient services and ideas are available a number of websites, including the National Energy Affordability and Accessibility Project (NEAPP) site.

If you're thinking of renovating, make energy efficient home improvements your first priority. Your monthly savings will quickly make up for the initial building costs, and you'll be helping to preserve our priceless energy resources.