

# Opportunities for Green Renovations in Existing Homes

By Danny Harvey and Steve Herzlieb

**W**hether you are a renovator, a new-homes builder or both, becoming an EarthCraft House renovator can benefit your business. According to data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, residential improvement and repair expenditures have remained at more than \$200 billion per year, despite significant drops in the single-family housing market. Consumer awareness of sustainability and green building is increasing. Green renovation will continue to grow as

more home owners decide to stay in their existing homes and seek renovators who can improve energy efficiency, demonstrate sustainable building practices and protect homeowner health and safety.

According to builder and renovator Olin Dillard, "Participating in EarthCraft House Renovation has made me a more valuable commodity. Customers are increasingly asking what they can do to reduce their environmental impact and make the world a better place to live."

Robert Soens of Pinnacle Custom Builders adds, "I've found that even if a customer needs only very minor work and is unable to incorporate extensive improvements, they still love the fact that I run my business green. Clients like to be working with someone who operates that way."

The EarthCraft House Renovation guidelines were developed specifically for homes in the southeastern United States and are designed to include many types of renovation projects, such as interior remodeling, exterior additions



*EarthCraft House Renovation is a flexible program that can accommodate a wide range of renovation types and architectural styles. (photo courtesy Pinnacle Custom Builders)*

*The use of formaldehyde-free and low-VOC materials results in healthier homes. (photo courtesy Pinnacle Custom Builders)*





and complete renovations. Renovators have the opportunity to choose a variety of options, products and methods for achieving certification. In addition, the quality assurance and advice provided throughout the EarthCraft House Renovation certification process can benefit renovators by resulting in fewer callbacks and better trade contractor performance.

Sustainability currently is receiving substantial media attention, which means marketing and publicity opportunities. TV shows such as *This Old House*, *HGTV House*, and *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* have incorporated elements of green building into their programs. A Renewal Construction project that demonstrates a wide variety of EarthCraft House Renovation options will be featured on the show *Renovation Nation*, which is set to air this year on Planet Green, a new channel from the Discovery Network.

The full-scale renovation includes building with structurally insulated panels, a geo-thermal heating and cooling system, solar and tankless hot water heating, rainwater harvesting, dual flush toilets utilizing grey water, recycled glass countertops, low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints and ENERGY STAR-qualified windows. Materials for the home were selected for high recycled content and availability from nearby sources to minimize transportation distance. Any waste materials from the construction process are recycled on site.

The benefits of green renovation extend beyond energy efficiency and protecting the environment. "There are many facets behind what it means to be green," said Anna Carbone of Renewal Construction. "Education and our relationship with our clients are very important to us. We focus on our clients, their families and how we can help them realize their renovation and sustainability dreams."

EarthCraft House renovators treat the house as a system, thus eliminating the causes of many common comfort problems and improving the indoor air quality of the home. Wise material and waste management choices further contribute to the creation of a healthy living environment and increase the sustainability of the renovation. According to home owner K.C. Boyce, "We think that doing a green renovation is not only the right thing to do, but it's going to result in a more comfortable and healthier home."

The advantages and satisfaction involved with green renovations are summed up by Matt Hoots of the Hoots Group, the 2008 EarthCraft House Renovator of the Year. "Several years ago we took a risk and required that all our clients pursue a green certification. EarthCraft House Renovation has been the most popular certification they chose for existing houses. We received an overwhelmingly positive response not only from our clients, but from the overall community. This commitment to sustainable renovations

has helped the Hoots Group become recognized as a dependable resource for green remodeling in Atlanta."

The EarthCraft House program began in 1999 as a partnership of the HBA and Southface Energy Institute. Courses offered through the program cover important aspects of building science and green building in the areas of site planning, energy efficiency, material use, waste management, lighting and appliances and indoor air quality. Visit [www.earthcrafthouse.com](http://www.earthcrafthouse.com) for more information.



## Busting the "Payback" Myth

When considering energy-efficient upgrades, many home owners ask, "How long is the payback period?" When financing a renovation, the decrease in utility bills and monthly operating costs frequently are greater than the increase in the loan payment. This results in immediate payback, with more money left in the pocket of the home owner every month.

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