

Check energy-saving features in the home

When buying a home, whether it's a new construction or a resale, find out what energy-saving features it has and write them down, specifying the benefits of each, advises the Birmingham-Bloomfield Board of Realtors. One way to start is to check with your local utility representative and, if it's a new home, the builder.

Reviewing some basic information about energy efficient features can help you ask the right questions and understand the answers you get.

The ability of a material to slow down or resist the transfer of heat is measured as its "R-value." Insulation is installed in floors, ceilings and walls. Fiberglass (blown or poured; in batting or blanket form), rock wool, cellulose and plastic foam are the materials most often used. The higher their R-value, the more resistance they have to heat transfer, making the home more energy efficient.

Normally, you can't see insulation, but you can do your homework by talking to the builder to find out if the home has good insulation. Find out if the attic has adequate insulation. Since heat rises, a well insulated attic could be a big money saver during the winter months.

TAKE A GOOD LOOK at the doors, windows and other openings to see whether they are sealed, caulked or weather-stripped. Some weather-tight homes have polystyrene vapor retarder on the heated sides of walls, ceilings and floors. Such features protect the home from uncomfortable drafts and dampness, making the heating/cooling system more efficient in any season.

Check the material of the doors—particularly at entrances to the house. Heat can escape when they are closed, not only around the edges but also through the door itself. The best doors for insulation are constructed of two strong metal sheets on the outside bonded around a core of urethane foam. Some doors are equipped with gaskets like a refrigerator door. When they are closed, the gasket seals against outside air.

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Glass, which conducts heat rapidly, is responsible for a great deal of heat transfer. Some houses have double- or triple-paned windows with wood frames or "thermal breaks" in the frames to prevent the heat loss that occurs with aluminum frames. Low-E windows are double-paned windows with special coating that reflect warmth back into the home. Or, conversely, low-E windows will reflect away from the home, reducing air conditioning costs.

IF A HOME HAS a central heating/cooling system, outside ducts that are sealed and wrapped with insulation will greatly contribute to its efficiency. Zonal heating is a great energy saver. Each room is equipped with its own wall or baseboard heater so that rooms may be heated individually, according to the occupants' needs. Another highly efficient system is the electric heat pump. Operating on the same principle as a refrigerator, heat pumps extract and pump warm air into the home during winter and reverse the process in summer.

About 19 percent of a home's total energy consumption goes to heating water. Energy-efficient water heaters are well insulated and near usage areas. Even greater savings are realized with heat-pump water heaters or solar water-heating systems.

Check any appliances being sold with a home. Most of the large ones have energy-efficient ratings.



LAURA VARGA/staff photographer

Ideas galore

Visitors at Homearama-Summer, now under way in West Bloomfield, can get ideas on two fronts — inside and outside of the 18 homes now open daily for viewing in Autumn Ridge subdivision, Orchard Lake at Walnut Lake Road. Above, the interior design of the living room of 4,000-square-foot French colonial Windsor model, by Rembrandt Construction. At the right, wrapped bamboo wall units from the Interlude Group of American Drew at Charles Furniture in Royal Oak complement the living-dining room area of the contemporary 3,400-square-foot Michael Anthony. Furniture in most of the homes will be for sale on Aug. 28, the closing day of the Homearama.



Merrill Lynch Realty



Understated elegance abounds in this recently completed FARMINGTON HILLS home! Professionally decorated and landscaped, Jacuzzi in master suite, sprinkler system and large deck. \$284,900 851-8100 6-B-1228



Beautiful FARMINGTON HILLS Two Story has many unique features including ceramic foyer, wood windows, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, formal dining, family room with fireplace and professional landscaping. \$249,000 478-5000 7-B-0731



FARMINGTON HILLS. Sensational Ranch features elegant entry, leaded glass doors, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, family room, formal dining, 2 fireplaces, patio plus inground pool with cabana and dressing area. Lovely landscaping. \$204,900 851-8100 6-B-1091



Prestigious Rolling Oaks location adds to this stately Colonial with quality throughout, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, formal dining, family room with fireplace, 1st floor laundry, central air, patio and deck. Newly landscaped and tastefully decorated. \$189,900 626-9100 2-B-1381



Surrounded by two ponds and nature setting, this custom Ranch is absolutely beautiful with open courtyards, great room with fireplace, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, patio, deck and 3 car garage. Quiet, FARMINGTON HILLS subdivision. \$178,900 626-9100 2-B-1382



Sharp 4 bedroom Colonial in FARMINGTON HILLS is situated on treed lot and offers library, family room, fireplace, 1st floor laundry, central air, screened porch and deck. \$162,900 626-9100 2-B-1197



Move right into the FARMINGTON HILLS Tudor style Colonial situated on beautiful lot! Four bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, hardwood floors, cathedral ceilings, spacious family room with fireplace, formal dining, kitchen with built-ins, central air and 3 doorways to large deck. \$157,500 626-9100 2-B-1401



Case Lake Front - Fabulous views of lake, beach, docks and pool from this penthouse Condo. Cathedral ceilings in living room and master bedroom. Ceramic tile foyer and kitchen. 3rd bedroom or den off foyer, upgrades, central air and extra half bath. Underground parking. Gorgeous unit. \$153,900 851-8100



Immaculate and open floor plan adds to this FARMINGTON HILLS Ranch with country kitchen, family room with beamed ceiling, full fireplace, 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 1st floor laundry room, central air, deck and 2 car garage. \$134,900 851-8100 6-B-1282



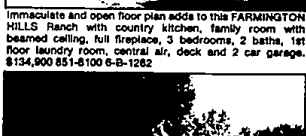
FARMINGTON HILLS Ranch is sharp with family room, formal dining, studio room, natural fireplace, 3 bedrooms, 1 1/2 baths, covered patio and lovely kidney-shaped inground pool. Large, private treed yard. \$132,500 626-9100 2-B-1280



Case Lake Front! End unit Condo in WATERFORD TWP. offers ceramic tile foyer, neutral carpet, 2 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, formal dining, great room, fireplace, central air, deck and appliances. Pool privileges plus dock facility. \$129,900 851-8100 6-B-1026



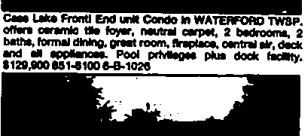
FARMINGTON HILLS Contemporary is situated on treed yard and offers fireplace, game room, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, porch and private deck. \$129,900 626-9100 2-B-1398



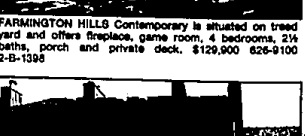
SOUTHFIELD Contemporary is situated in lovely treed yard and offers new carpeting, family room, fireplace, well beamed room, formal dining, 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, central air, patio and wonderful decking. \$119,500 851-8100 6-B-1280



A real find! FARMINGTON HILLS Ranch on large attractive landscaped lot is absolutely charming with many upgrades, 3 bedrooms, formal dining, living room with fireplace, 1st floor laundry, private patio and convenient location. \$114,900 478-5000 7-B-1585



Updated and nicely landscaped this 3 bedroom Contemporary in FARMINGTON HILLS has sleek foyer, cathedral ceilings, 2 1/2 baths, family room, fireplace and 2 car detached garage. Private yard. \$114,900 626-9100 2-B-1399



Without a doubt, this is one of the most special Young House's around ever! Its charming decor and list of extras makes it a ten + on anyone's scale. Some of its features include two fireplaces (one in finished lower level), English courtyard entrance, ceramic kitchen floor, skylights, custom blinds and wall papers. \$94,900 626-9100 2-B-1379

Birmingham/Bloomfield

1225 N. Woodward

646-6000

Franklin Township

626-9100

Royal Oak Township

478-5000

Troy

486-8900

689-8900

Rochester

651-8850

West Bloomfield

300 Orchard Lake Rd.

851-8100

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