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THE BOCA BEACH REPORT

January 2010

*Privileged
information about
your real estate*

In This Issue

Reduce Energy
Usage With
Basic Home
Improvements

Remodeling A
Home For Profit

News From
Our Area

*This publication is not
a solicitation but is an
information service from
this real estate office.*

Reduce Energy Usage With Basic Home Improvements

We probably will never see the inexpensive energy rates of the past. The days of cheap energy may be over. If you have had higher utility bills already this winter, there may be something you can do about it.

A major home improvement store chain reported in this year that the purchase of energy-saving products continues to boost profits. Sales of insulated windows and blinds, light switch dimmers, fiberglass insulation, programmable thermostats, weatherstripping and light-reducing window film had risen over 25 percent.

The demand for fluorescent light bulbs and water-heater insulating jackets has more than doubled.

Since the gasoline crises of the early 1970s, home-construction techniques have favored energy-efficiency. However, the majority of houses in this country were built in times when energy was less expensive. No one ever worried about raising the thermostat because there was a seemingly endless supply of fuel oil, natural gas and electricity.

Now homeowners need to retrofit older houses to reduce energy costs. Here are a few suggestions of these

improvements and how much you might save:

Replacement Windows

The savings of the gas, electric or oil bill for the following year will be the final answer of the savings of the energy-efficiency of a replacement window. But double-pane windows with low-e (emissivity) coating can reduce heating bills by 35 percent in cold climates, compared with uncoated, single-pane windows, according to the Alliance to Save Energy, a Washington, D.C., advocacy group.

Low-e coatings let in visible light but block radiant heat losses to cut heating bills. The windows should have solar control, or "spectrally-selective," coatings to block solar heat gain to save cooling energy but let in visible light.

The glass is not the only thing. Windows should have insulated frames. Metal frames without insulation are less efficient. Vinyl, insulated vinyl, fiberglass, and wood frames are the most efficient.

The gas filler in a double-pane window is critical to energy efficiency. High-efficiency models

(continued on page two)

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Reduce Energy ...*(continued from page one)*

use argon or krypton gas instead of plain air. These conduct very little heat and help the window's insulating properties. The material used to create the separation between the two panes of glass, called a thermal break, used to be metal. New materials are better-insulating and make the overall window more efficient.

Window Film

Window film was first used in commercial buildings with large windows, but then made available for home use. The film is applied to the glass to reduce infrared solar heat and ultraviolet radiation but lets in light. Some of this window-film can filter out as much as 98 percent of the heat while letting the light in. It can cost several hundred to several thousand dollars for an entire house.

Insulation

Fiberglass or cellulose insulation is one of the least-

expensive and easiest ways to control the climate indoors.

The attic is the easiest and least expensive place to insulate. The insulation installed between the joists will keep warm air from rising higher than the top floor of your house and the heat of the sun from making that top floor even hotter in the summer.

Insulation is measured in R-values. The higher the R-value, the better walls and the roof will be able to resist the transfer of heat. The federal Department of Energy recommends ranges of R-values based on heating and cooling costs and climate conditions.

For example, attic insulation might have an R-value of R-49 in a very cold climate such as the New England states and a very warm climate such as Phoenix. The goal is to block the transfer of heat through the roof, whether it is coming from outside or inside.

R-11 to R-28 insulation is recommended for interior walls, again depending on the climate.

Some fiberglass insulation is paper-faced, which makes it easier to handle and install. A roll of paper-faced R-19, for example has enough insulation to cover 87 square feet. Just measure the area to get an accurate cost at the home improvement store.

Programmable Thermostats

An excellent investment for little cost, probably about \$100. You can save as much as 10 percent a year in both heating and cooling costs by adjusting the times you want the furnace or central air system to be turned on or off automatically.

Light Dimmers

They typically cost \$16 to \$29, but say electric utility companies, you can "reduce lighting intensity, increase the life of the bulbs and save energy." However, never use dimmers on any fluorescent lighting.

Weatherstripping

Weatherstripping tape, felt or foam, costs from under \$1 to ➡

Reduce Energy ...*(continued from page two)*

\$12, depending on the level of sophistication. This is an easy and quick way to stop air leaks.

Fluorescent Bulbs

Fluorescent bulbs do cost more than incandescent bulbs, but they are more efficient and

can last six to 10 times longer, thus paying for themselves over a short time.

Water Heater Jackets

This sounds good, but it is not. Water Heater Jackets cost under \$30, but if you put one on an old or inefficient water heater, it is a

waste of time and money. Water heaters tend to last 10 to 15 years, so as the replacement date approaches, consider an energy-efficient model. They, like fluorescent lights, cost more but save enough money over the long term to pay for themselves. ♣

Remodeling A Home For Profit

Remodeling homes for profit is nothing new. Remodeling the home they are living in has always been popular with owners who wanted to make their home more interesting and livable. Now with values in real estate up, it makes sense to do things to make the home interesting to the new owner before listing for sale. It can be profitable.

The Owner-Occupied Home

Owner-occupied homes make up the largest group of homes that are remodeled. When owners live in a home, they see things that can be done that will increase value. The owner can put up with the work going on around the house, knowing that it will lead to a later profit. A tenant in a rental, paying top rent, does not expect to be disturbed.

Here is why more remodeling is happening:

- Strict building codes throughout the country means homes have been well-built for decades. Some remodeling specialists in many areas have become expert at remodeling some of the older homes into new designs.

- Homeowners today know the value of their home in the current condition and are

aware of the increase in value that a remodel can bring. It always makes sense to make profits.

- Many owners have profited so much with remodeling their own home that they have become semi-professionals at it. They are out to find other homes that can be remodeled for profits.

- The young to middle age professionals in all fields enjoy leading a comfortable life at home. They improve a home with skylights, finished basements, fireplaces, hardwood floors, sun porches, decks and spas, upgraded bathrooms and particularly kitchens.

Your Income Property Upgrade

If remodeling homes increases values, you can bet there is a large increase in the remodeling of rental structures also. The volume is not as high as in owner-occupied homes because owners have to contend with tenants and lower income during the period. But in any area where there are high vacancy rates and severe competition for tenants, owners are remodeling in order to stay in the rental business. The recent increase in rent levels has given the owners money to do this work. The percentage of rental units in overall remodeling expenditures has grown by 10% in recent years.

Profitable Improvements

When a home is completely remodeled, it is practically a

rebuilding from the ground up. This will change an old out-of-date structure into a new, modern building. When the owner does smaller, individual changes, the changes must be carefully selected. Some changes cost a great deal, but add very little to the value.

Over the years, one of the most effective improvements in a home or rental property has been the addition of a fireplace. Although the cost of adding a fireplace can vary from \$5,000 to \$20,000, the average added value to the selling price is always higher.

In these days of higher costs of energy, pick the right fireplace. The old-fashioned open-hearth fireplace may lose more heat than it generates. Already warm room air may be drawn up the chimney, which pulls colder air into the home through the tiny cracks and gaps in walls and around windows.

The heat-circulating model may be the most efficient in the newer designed fireplaces. This fireplace has a motor driven blower that circulates room air around the back of the firebox, which then circulates the warmed air into the room. Some models of heat circulating fireplaces have thermostats and multi-speed blowers. These additions increase the efficiency of the unit and reduce the need for other heating equipment to heat the rest of the home. ♣

Boca BEACHFRONT Availability

The following is a summary of the available and pending residences located on the East (BEACH) side of OCEAN Blvd. (AIA) in Boca Raton. 0.1% to 3.9% is Low Inventory * 4.0% to 6.9% is Balanced Inventory * 7.0% to 9.9% is High Inventory * 10.0% + is Excessive Inventory

North Beach

(North of Palmetto Park Road on North OCEAN Blvd. - Listed from North to South)

Address	Condo Name	TA	AA	%A	ADOM	List Price Range	PC
2150	Aegean	8	0	0.0%	0	SOLD OUT	0
2070	Athena	4	1	25.0%	244	2.95M	0
2066	Ocean Reef Towers	55	5	9.1%	352	575K to 798K	0
2000	Brighton	39	3	7.7%	582	579.9K to 1.5M	0
S/T	North Beach	106	9	8.5%	417	1.088M	0

Boca Beach

(South of Palmetto Park Road to the Boca Inlet on South OCEAN Blvd. - Listed from North to South)

Address	Condo Name	TA	AA	%A	ADOM	List Price Range	PC
250	Marbella	155	6	3.9%	199	269K to 850K	2
310	Boca Mar	38	1	2.6%	275	299.9K	0
350	Beresford	53	3	5.7%	443	1.15M to 1.79M	0
400	Excelsior, The	27	7	25.9%	358	3.4M to 6.5M	0
500&550	Chalfonte, The	378	10	2.6%	113	395K to 1.1M	4
600	Sabal Shores	125	7	5.6%	191	379K to 1.5M	0
700	Sabal Point	67	3	4.5%	87	565K to 889K	1
750	Sabal Ridge	31	3	9.9%	129	849K to 1.65M	0
800	Presidential Place	42	3	7.1%	439	2.995M to 3.95M	0
S/T	Boca Beach	916	44	4.8%	221	1.624M	7

South Beach

(South of the Boca Inlet on South OCEAN Blvd. - Listed from North to South)

Address	Condo Name	TA	AA	%A	ADOM	List Price Range	PC
1180	Cloister del Mar	96	5	5.2%	159	325K to 498.5K	0
1200	Cloister Beach Towers	128	2	1.6%	121	299.9K to 325K	0
1400&1500	Addison, The	169	15	8.9%	330	699K to 3.45M	0
1800	Placide, The	54	3	5.6%	146	848K to 1.495M	2
2000	Whitchall	164	15	9.2%	289	309K to 1.1M	0
2494	Aragon, The	41	9	22.0%	256	1.495M to 7.25M	0
2500	Luxuria, The	24	2	8.3%	272	4.5M to 4.9M	0
2600	Stratford Arms	120	10	8.3%	181	724.9K to 895K	0
2800	Whitehall South	256	15	6.1%	226	449K to 2.89M	2
3000	Three Thousand South	80	7	8.8%	311	445K to 659K	1
S/T	South Beach	1132	83	7.4%	253	1.183M	5

Totals	Boca's Oceanfront	2154	136	6.3%	253	1.319M	12
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Key:

TA = Total Number of Apartments in Development * AA = Number of Apartments Available For Sale
 %A = Percent of Apartments in Development For Sale * ADOM = Average Number of Days on Market per Listing
 PC = Number of Apartments SOLD and Pending Closing

This information is compiled from RMLS, Inc., on November 23, 2009. This representation is based in whole or in part on data supplied by the RMLS, Inc. RMLS, Inc. does not guarantee or is not in any way responsible for its accuracy. Data maintained by RMLS may not reflect all real estate activity in the market.