



STYLE GUIDE



setting to maximize savings, and an app for tracking energy usage and savings. The smart home, in which all manner of energy usage can be tracked and optimized, is now a reality, and thermostats are an integral part of that.

INSULATION

Most homeowners are shocked to find out just how much air loss the average home suffers from, with typical fiberglass insulation. Up to 40 percent of heating or cooling bills can be traced back to air loss.

Upgrading to an insulation that not only has a high R-value, but is able to create an effective air seal in a home can really pay off when the property is finally listed. Spray foam insulation has the ability to do all of these things, making it a worthwhile investment, and one that is frequently recommended by the celebrity remodelers on HGTV.

WINDOW FILM

For homeowners who don't have the resources to replace a property's windows, a window film may be a great alternative. Homeowners from warmer and cooler parts of the country can all benefit from window film, which protects a home's furnishings and occupants from damaging UV rays. In fact, there are many window films that increase the energy efficiency of a home by retaining the heat in the winter and reflecting more of the sun's rays in the summer.

BY GLYNIS RATCLIFFE

Energy efficiency has become a major selling point for homes — and it's easy to see why. The potential to save money on monthly energy bills and reduce reliance on fossil fuels can increase a property's market value by thousands of dollars.

However, not every homeowner has made the leap into energy efficient living. If you have potential clients looking to maximize the value of their home before they list, there are several upgrades they can make, including these common household items that can be replaced by energy efficient alternatives.

LIGHTS

These days, it's not enough to replace the incandescent bulbs in a home with compact fluorescent bulbs. The next generation of energy efficient lighting is made with LEDs, which may cost more upfront than CFLs,

but do not need to be replaced as frequently and use fewer watts. In addition, LED lighting can be controlled remotely from a smartphone and has dimmers, sensors, and timers to help maximize energy efficiency. Many LED lighting systems are able to shift colors to adapt to personal preference, and stylistically the options continue to improve.

SMART THERMOSTAT

While smart thermostats have been around for years, the latest versions are able to learn from the behavior of a home's occupants and adjust temperature programming accordingly. With a smart thermostat like Nest, there's the option to choose a more energy efficient temperature

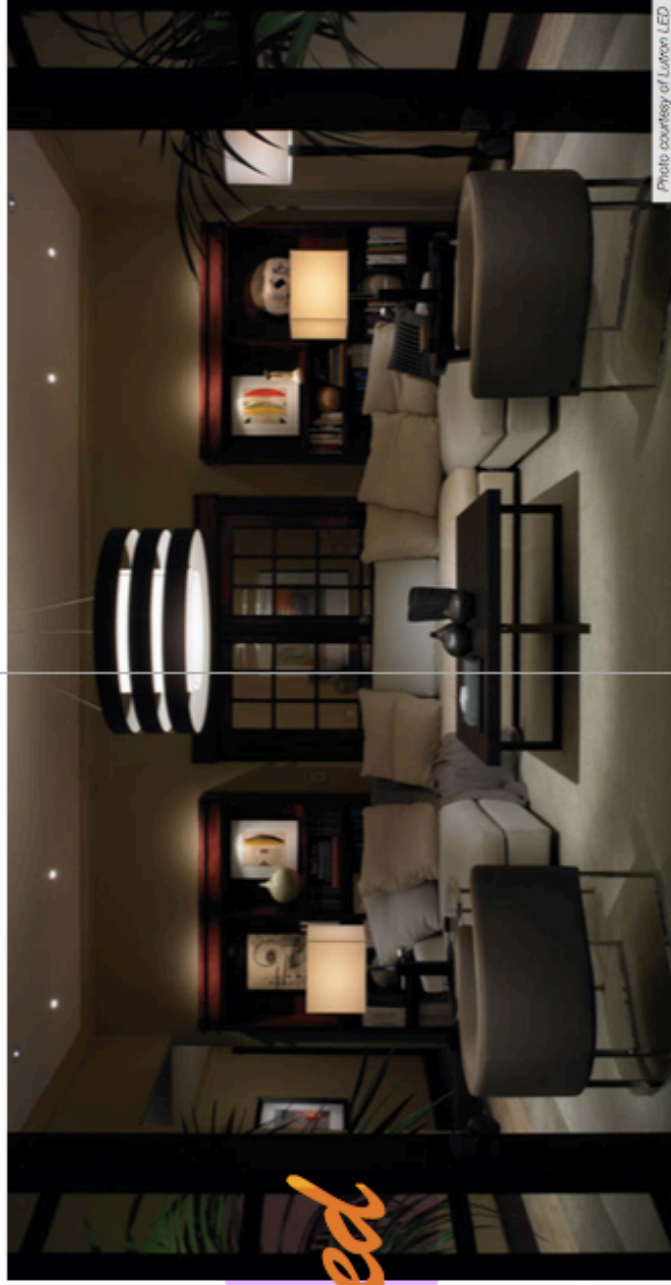


Photo courtesy of Lutron LED

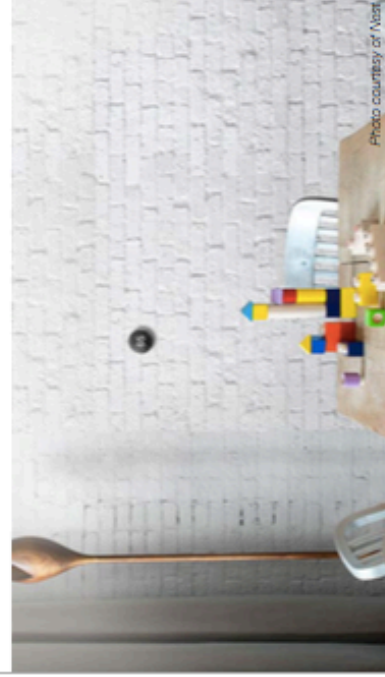


Photo courtesy of West

SOLAR PANELS

Photovoltaic solar panels, which can be placed on a house roof and convert sunlight directly into electricity, are out of reach for many homeowners. But there's a new product available that may change that. A recent Kickstarter campaign successfully raised the capital to launch SolarGaps, which has created window blinds that have small photovoltaic panels on them. Not only are they more reasonably priced, but they serve several purposes acting as shades during the day and storing solar energy that can power appliances and devices, thus reducing monthly electricity bills. ■