During your Home Inspection

Identify Energy Saving Opportunities and Plan for an Energy Audit

Most home buyers hire a qualified home inspector to look for potential safety hazards, non-functioning items, deferred-cost items, and other areas for improvement. Though most home inspectors are not trained energy experts, your home inspector can help you identify possible energy saving opportunities and prepare for an energy audit with a trained professional later on.

**Ask about air sealing**

Penetrations into and out of the living space allow cold air to seep in and heat to escape. Look for penetrations into the attic and along seams in the basement where the foundation meets the wall framing. Sealing these gaps and cracks will keep warm air where it belongs.

*Bottom line:* Most homes have great potential to improve air sealing, and it is the most cost-effective way to reduce energy bills. A home energy auditor can prioritize where to install air-sealing measures.

**Ask about insulation**

More insulation means energy savings and increased comfort all year round. Insulation is measured in **R-value** (the higher, the better) and is determined by type and depth of material. Home inspectors often estimate R-values and insulation condition in their report. Compare these values to recommended standards at [www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing.hm_improvement_insulation_table](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing.hm_improvement_insulation_table).

*Bottom line:* Most homes have insufficiently insulated attics, walls, and foundations for our climate. A home energy auditor can help you find cost-effective insulation upgrades for your home.

**Ask about the HVAC systems**

Home inspectors often estimate the age of mechanical systems. You may find that your HVAC system is nearing the end of its useful life and could be replaced with newer, more efficient models.

*Bottom line:* Don’t wait until an emergency to think about your options for replacing your heating system! Heat pumps can supplement and ease strain on an aging heating system, as well as offer low-cost air conditioning. Modern wood pellet boilers can completely replace an existing boiler or furnace. And the latest oil and propane heating systems are also very efficient. You can discuss your options during your home energy audit.

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**Common Energy Saving Opportunities**

- Conduct an energy audit
- Air seal between living space & attic
- Air seal between foundation & walls
- Add insulation in the attic *(to R-49)*
- Add insulation in the basement *(to R-15)*
- Add insulation in the walls *(to R-20)*
- Replace appliances with newer models
Plan for and schedule your energy audit – likely AFTER the closing

Did your home inspector point out any possible energy saving opportunities? If so, plan to hire a qualified energy contractor to complete a home energy audit within your first year of homeownership. An energy audit with a trained professional is the best way to identify and prioritize opportunities for energy savings and improved comfort.

_Bottom line:_ Most homes have opportunities for cost effective energy savings, and most home inspectors will advise you to get an energy audit with a certified energy professional. You can find lists of qualified home performance contractors at VitalCommunities.org/GreenRealEstate.

Hire an energy-savvy home inspector

If you haven’t already connected with a home inspector, there are number of companies tuned into energy saving opportunities who are members of the Green Real Estate Network. All of these inspectors serve both Vermont and New Hampshire.

- **River Valley Home Inspection**, Dave DeSimone, Orford, NH
ddrvhi@gmail.com, 603-667-5616
- **S & K Inspections**, Scott Wade, Charlestown, NH
dale@twinstateinspections.com, 603-643-4677
- **Twin State Inspections**, Dale Shriver, Etna, NH
akservices@comcast.net, 603-558-5140