

In Greening Your House, Where Do You Get the Most Bang for Your Buck?

There are so many things you can do to reduce energy consumption in your home, and some of us have done many of them — no one more so than my friend and mentor, Steve Stevens.

Often I'm asked by home owners, "What gives me the most bang for my buck?" I think Steve would agree with me that the answer is almost always insulation and air sealing. Reducing cold air flowing into your house is the single most effective way to reduce your heating bill in the winter, and that same insulation will reduce your cooling bill in the summer.

So, you ask, where is that cold air getting into my house? While you can detect some of these yourself and can install weather stripping and caulk to stop drafts under and around doors, windows and other exterior wall penetrations such as electrical outlets, I suggest paying for an energy audit of your house. I have a vendor who will do it for \$120, which he'll then apply to any insulation or other fixes he does for you. (The audit costs much more, but Xcel Energy subsidizes it.) In an energy audit, a "blower door"

test is done. In this test a computer-monitored fan is installed in an exterior door and tries to suck the air out of your house. By measuring how hard that is to do, the computer determines how easy it is for outside air to enter your house. While the fan is running, the technician goes around your house with a super-sensitive infrared camera which detects temperature differences as little as one-tenth of a degree.

You don't have to wait for winter to do a blower-door test. Hot days are perfect for this. "When it's hot outside, the walls light up like a Christmas tree on the infrared camera," I was told.

Those places identified by the camera are where you need to do air sealing. Caulk is cheap, too, so caulking the places where air enters your house is your single best expenditure in making your home energy efficient.

If you're willing to spend a couple thousand dollars or so (depending on the size of your house), I am a huge fan of blowing cellulose insulation not only into your attic but also into your walls — even if your walls are already insulated. I had this done on a 1950's house I owned, and the effect was amazing. What I learned was that it's not about air flow alone. Your walls function as radiators — that is, they radiate their temperature, and you can feel it in the room. You've probably walked past a brick wall on a sunny day and felt the heat radiating off that wall. (Just walk in front of Golden Real Estate's office on any sunny day!)

Well, walls can also radiate *coldness*. When I had the exterior walls of that 1950's home packed with cellulose, the feeling inside went from chilly to cozy even though the air tempera-

ture maintained by the forced air furnace was no different. That's because the walls were no longer cold to the touch and therefore no longer radiating coldness.

Steve Stevens, whom I mentioned in the first paragraph, has gone far beyond these simple steps. When I shot a video tour of his house a couple years ago it took over half an hour for him to lead me through his 1970's home describing the 20 or 30 different actions he had taken to reduce the energy consumption of his house. I have put a link to that video on my blog if you want to really dive deep in this topic. See JimSmithBlog.com. (Note, you can subscribe to my blog, which contains all my newspaper columns and much more.)

Have You Been Caught in This Rental Scam?

I've written previously about a scam in which vacant homes for sale are hijacked by scammers and advertised "for rent" at below-market rents on craigslist. The scammers are out-of-state or in a foreign country and tell you to wire them the money and they'll mail you the keys. Don't believe it!

My new listing on W. Warren Drive (featured last week) was scammed in this manner, but this time it was posted on websites which charge money to post rental listings. In the past I've advised renters to search such websites instead of craigslist because scammers don't want to spend money, but there's an explanation: the scammers use stolen credit cards to pay for their fraudulent listings!

I have posted a sign rider on that listing which says "NOT FOR RENT — Beware of Internet Scams."

REAL ESTATE TODAY

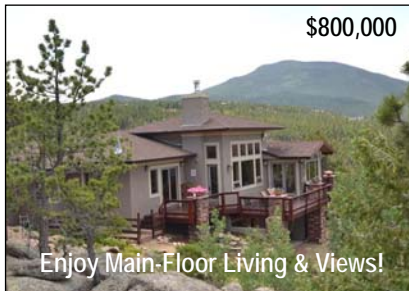


By JIM SMITH, Realtor®

This Week's Featured New Listing

Escape the Summer Heat at 8,650 Feet!

This simply stunning custom home at 103 Stone Cliff Circle features top-of-the-line upgrades, quality construction and a design flair throughout. You'll enjoy the stone accents & expansive Brazilian hardwood decks from which you'll get unobstructed, million-dollar views of the Continental Divide from Longs Peak to James Peak! Backing to Roosevelt National Forest, the home sits on over 2 acres with beautiful lichen-covered rock outcroppings. The light-filled, open-floor plan includes a magnificent great room with its EPA-approved wood-burning fireplace, and an entertainer's gourmet kitchen. The gorgeous west-facing sunroom is perfect for casual sunset dining. The main-floor master suite is made for romance with its gas fireplace, spa bathroom, double shower, large Jacuzzi & walk-in closet/dressing room. You'll love the mix of stone, tile, hardwood and berber carpeting, with radiant in-floor



Enjoy Main-Floor Living & Views!

heating throughout. Even the finished garage is heated! You're just 30 minutes from Golden or Boulder, and two minutes from the Wondervu Cafe. Click on the "Video Tour" link at StoneCliffHome.info — it's just like an actual showing, inside and out. **Open this Sunday, 2-4 p.m.**

While you're escaping the heat this Sunday, visit our other Coal Creek Canyon open house (1-4pm), at 25462 Westridge Road in Blue Mountain Estates. Its video tour is at www.BlueMountainHome.info.

Support Golden Lions & Rotary Clubs

Service clubs like the Lions and Rotary do so much for our communities using money they obtain from great events and fundraisers. For the Golden Lions Club, it's a raffle with over 200 prizes including a top prize of \$1,000 and a football autographed by 39 Broncos, including Peyton Manning. The last chance to buy tickets (\$1 each, 6 for \$5) is Saturday, July 4th in Lions Park, downtown Golden starting at noon. Drawings take place all day with the grand prize drawn at 7pm. Fireworks follow after sunset. Meanwhile, the Golden Rotary Club has its annual peach sale. Pick up is Aug. 15th. You can order through Aug. 7th online at www.GoldenRotaryPeaches.org.

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All Agents Are Certified EcoBrokers

Jim Smith
 Broker/Owner
Golden Real Estate, Inc.
 DIRECT: 303-525-1851
 EMAIL: Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com
 17695 South Golden Road, Golden 80401
 WEBSITE: www.GoldenRealEstate.com

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