

## Real Estate Today

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# Why a Hot Water Recirc Line Is My Favorite Home Upgrade

By **JIM SMITH, Realtor®**

When I am showing or previewing homes, I will often turn on the hot water tap in the master bathroom and measure the time it takes for the water to run hot. Many times I have waited over 30 seconds. — once over a minute. Perhaps you are familiar with this scenario: you turn on the hot water, wash your hands and face in the cold water coming from the faucet, and then turn off the hot water having never actually felt hot water.



With energy prices as high as they are, here's a troubling thought: you paid to heat that water you used, even though it was cold! And you heated the water to replace that once-hot water. It's sitting in the pipes leading to your faucet, cooling off so that it too will be cold the next time you turn on the hot water faucet!

There's an easy solution to this problem — installing a hot water recirculation line. This is a half-inch copper pipe or tube going from the farthest faucet in your house back to the bottom of your water heater. This return line in effect makes the hot water pipes to and from that faucet an extension of your hot water heater. If your water heater is lower than your farthest faucet, the hot water naturally rises to it, because the return line allows the cold water to return to the bottom of the tank. Otherwise, a low watt-

age pump may be required.

I have retrofitted every house I bought for the past 20 years with this kind of hot water recirculation line, never paying the plumber over \$1,000 to do so, including the cost of insulation for both the supply and return pipes. An unfinished basement makes this retrofit less costly, but it's still affordable even if you have to make access holes in ceilings and walls to run the return tubing.

The cost of putting such a recirc line in during initial construction would be nominal, even for the biggest house, so it surprises me that none of the big-name builders even offers it as an upgrade. If you know of a builder who does, let me know and I will publish that fact in a future column.

**Caution:** Do not fall for the under-sink recirc kit being sold at Home Depot. This kit cross-connects your hot and cold water lines. I tried this unit. It doesn't work well and costs energy rather than saving energy.

## Habitat Home I Sponsored Was Dedicated Last Week

It was a pleasure to attend the dedication of six Habitat for Humanity homes on the 1500 block of Fenton Street on May 21st. One of those homes was co-sponsored by me from my donation of 10% of last year's commissions. Congratulations to the Montoya family on getting their new home! In a related story, I am honored to report that Housing Denver just named me a "Housing Star" in the Volunteer of the Year category.

## This Week's Featured Listing

### Price Reduced on Fabulous Golden Home!

Located on a mini cul-de-sac in Golden's Village at Mountain Ridge, this home has 4 bedrooms, 3½ baths, and 3,227 of finished space, including a walk-out basement which opens onto a huge grassy backyard. Other features include vaulted ceilings, 5-piece bathroom in the master suite, a concrete slab and electrical sub-panel in place for your hot tub, 42" maple kitchen cabinets and matching maple flooring, in-wall home theatre speakers, and great neighbors! Open this Saturday, 1-4 p.m. Now listed at only **\$465,000**.



**Jim Smith**

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