

Home Energy Retrofits: Benefits for people, Benefits for business.

What is a home energy retrofit?

An energy retrofit is the process of improving the energy efficiency of all components of a home:

- ✓ Building Envelope
- ✓ Heating & Cooling
- ✓ Appliances
- ✓ Smart Home Controls

What are the benefits?

Energy retrofits offer your clients a great opportunity to:

- ✓ Improve the comfort and energy efficiency of their home
- ✓ Potentially reduce the costs associated with running the home
- ✓ Have a quieter home
- ✓ Heat and cool their home easily
- ✓ Enjoy cleaner air

As we move towards net-zero, the energy efficiency of the home will become more important to buyers making energy efficient homes easier to sell.

Why talk to your clients about this now?

Federal, provincial, and in some cases local government financing and rebate opportunities are widely available, so it's highly beneficial to do the work now. Plus, retrofitted homes are not only more comfortable and climate-friendly, they are also more valuable.

How can you advise clients about energy retrofits?

Share the retrofit process (below). When followed, this proven process results in the greatest benefits and also ensures that the maximum grant funding can be accessed.

Homeowners will have different levels of understanding relating to energy efficiency, so it's important to use relatable language and avoid jargon if you can.

Rather than talking about R values, air changes, and efficiency ratings, ask them questions like:

- ✓ Does it get too hot to sleep in the summer?
- ✓ What parts of your home feel too hot or too cold?
- ✓ Does your house feel drafty in the winter?
- ✓ Are your energy bills higher than you would like?
- ✓ Is it noisy inside the house?
- ✓ Is there condensation on the inside of your windows?

The process

STEP 1: GET AN ENERGY EVALUATION BY A REGISTERED ENERGY ADVISOR (EA)

If they haven't come to you with a Renovation Upgrade Report, direct your clients toward a registered Energy Advisor who will help them understand their home's current energy usage.

Registered by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), EAs deliver the EnerGuide Rating System (ERS) and use diagnostic and modeling tools to provide impartial, third-party verification and ratings of a home's energy efficiency.

EAs can work alongside you on retrofit projects to assist your clients in decision-making that will result in the most beneficial outcomes.

They'll provide a detailed Renovation Upgrade Report that identifies areas that require attention. They'll also explore additional opportunities with homeowners to create a roadmap towards a healthier, more sustainable and efficient home.

EAs are a great resource for all parties involved in a retrofit project. They're an extremely beneficial resource for contractors. Consider investing the time to build a relationship with an experienced and trusted EA.

You and your clients can find an experienced EA here: betterhomesbc.ca.

STEP 2: IMPROVE THE BUILDING ENVELOPE

The Renovation Upgrade Report will outline a range of recommendations specific to your home. Start with the recommendations for the building envelope first—things like insulation, air sealing, and windows and doors.

As a qualified contractor, you know the importance of the building envelope. Working with the EA's report will provide insight about upgrades that will improve your client's building envelope, making your job easier (and faster).

The Renovation Upgrade Report will provide a step-by-step checklist of the work that needs to be done to improve comfort and energy efficiency for your client. You can use the report as a scope of work to create an estimate.

For your client to take advantage of CleanBC funding, you must be registered with the Home Performance Stakeholder Council and join their list of qualified contractors.

To read more about it and access their extensive resources visit homeperformance.ca

Remember, some funding opportunities may require a registered Energy Advisor to be involved in the project. This is an important step for your client.

STEP 3: ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING YOU CAN

- ✓ **Install a heat pump.** Heat pumps are a well-established, extremely efficient way to heat *and cool* a home while also reducing pollution. The key feature of heat pumps is they capture and move warm air rather than create it by burning fuel (like gas furnaces). In winter, even when it's cold, heat pumps capture heat from outside air and move it to the inside of your home. At the same time, they are removing cool air from inside and pushing it outside. This whole system works in reverse during warmer months to provide air conditioning.

Placement, sizing, aesthetics, budget, noise and supplementary heating (in cold climates) are all considerations that you should raise and discuss with a client.

- ✓ **Install an induction stove.** Replacing a gas stove with an electric induction unit is an important step toward electrification of the home. Cooking is easier and far more efficient with 90% of energy channeled to the pan resulting in a 70% reduction in energy consumption. Induction stoves are also really easy to clean and make the home safer by eliminating methane gas.

STEP 4: INSTALL SMART HOME CONTROLS

Discuss the benefits of smart thermostats and other technologies to reduce energy usage while allowing a more comfortable and healthy living environment.

New technology allows for greater control over home energy usage by setting more specific parameters around the way a home operates in terms of heating, cooling and energy usage. Upgrading to LED lights is another little (yet important!) step.

