

## Save Green

by Zaher Karp

An emphasis has been placed on "going green" in both commercial sectors and city awareness campaigns. An eco-friendly lifestyle reduces our community's harmful effects on the environment and offers substantial savings within the home. Good for our environment. Good for your wallet.

Green Built Homes is a program founded in 1999 by the Wisconsin Environmental Initiative in partnership with the Madison Area Builders Association. The program certifies new and remodeled homes that are sustainable and energy efficient, and promotes green building practices in Wisconsin. Homeowners and builders who are participating in the program can head to the Green Built Homes' Web site for checklists to use while selecting materials and furnishings that conserve both energy and natural resources. Homes are then judged on a point-based system.



*Give your home a green makeover and save money.*

One factor Green Built Homes takes into consideration is site choice. If your home is within a half-mile of a bus route, bike path, school or office, it's closer to becoming certified and you're in a position to save a significant amount of money on rising fuel costs. Landscaping is another change that can result in significant savings. The Green Built Homes Web site advises, "If you plant native species your garden will require less maintenance, less water and fewer chemicals. Consider grasses such as fescue and gamma, as well as various "no-mow" species...can reduce overall water usage by as much as 50% in some households." The organization also cautions Wisconsinites to be aware of lake problems caused by excessive fertilizer runoff and weed growth.

Sustain Dane is another local group promoting sustainability in the area. The not-for-profit organization also shares some money-saving ideas. Deb Saeger, Rain Barrel Program Development Coordinator, explains, "A modest home improvement investment can yield big results both for the environment and your pocket book. One easy do-it-yourself project is to change out bathroom and kitchen plumbing parts for high-efficiency components [that] conserve water without compromising on functionality. And because you're conserving hot water in the shower and with faucets, you'll also save money on hot water heating, and reduce your carbon footprint too."

Sustain Dane offers a water conservation kit that doesn't require installation by a plumber and yields surprising results. The low-flow showerhead is uses at 1.75 gallons per minute whereas many showerheads use four to eight gallons per minute. For older toilets, there's an "ingenious device that redirects water from the toilet overflow tube that would be wasted when refilling into the tank," says Saeger.