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Business

Small steps can aid the environment

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BALTIMORE - You're graded in school and evaluated at your job.

Now, a local company will give your house a report card.

Baltimore-based TerraLogos Green Home Services evaluates energy use in homes and recommends energy-saving steps. Inspectors conduct a blower door test and an infrared camera inspection to reveal hidden air leaks and insulation problems, said Peter van Buren, director of green energy at TerraLogos.

Homeowners will pay \$450 for the three-hour service in the hope of saving more in the long run.

"Every single house we've come into, we say, 'Okay, I can see why you called,' " van Buren said.

Jim Maguire had his Baltimore home evaluated. "With those kinds of tools, they can pinpoint problems," Maguire said. "It was real obvious where the problems were."

The service includes suggestions for home energy investments — and for efficient homes, "graduated" suggestions such as solar paneling, van Buren said. Maguire's house received about a dozen recommendations, which he has started to do himself. For the less handy, TerraLogos recommends "sustainable network" contractors who understand the ins and outs of energy conservation.

Temple Chappell, owner and president of ProCoat Applications Inc., said using spray-foam insulation could help homeowners save 40 percent to 75 percent in heating and cooling costs within five years.

"I'm doing the same things in my house as a homeowner, and I expect the bills next year to be significantly different," van Buren said.

Walt Auburn, assistant director of energy efficiency at Maryland Energy Administration, said the process is becoming a trend.

The home services branch, a sister company to the five-year-old green design firm TerraLogos EcoArchitecture, opened its doors Nov. 1 and has since inspected 40 homes.

Homeowner participation is encouraging.

"People value energy and their own internal space and its effect on the planet," Auburn said. "That's why many people are choosing green."

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