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REAL ESTATE: VALUE ADDED

Cut your energy bills in half

Yes, really. These five leak-plugging, warmth-trapping, efficiency-enhancing ideas could slice your home's energy usage by up to 50 percent.

By Money Magazine's Josh Garskof and Joe Light



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Upgrade your equipment

There's no getting around it: Replacing your entire heating and cooling system is a big, expensive project. But if your system is more than two decades old, the new one should easily pay for itself in three to seven years. In the long term it can save you more money than any other home improvement project.

Annual savings : As much as 25% to 50% on your fuel bills.

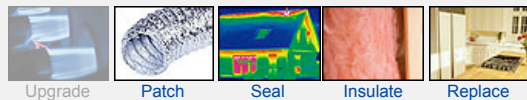
Up-front cost : \$3,000 to \$6,000 for a new furnace and air conditioning unit, including installation.

Tax credit : \$300 for central AC system; \$300 for water heater; \$150 for furnace or broiler (credit cannot exceed \$500).

Quick Fix : Air Filters (costing about \$30 a year) could save you about \$100 a year if you change them every three months, according to the U.S. Green Building Council. Chose a pleated model - it'll do a better job.



Natural gas burns cleaner than oil, but stick with an oil system if you've already got one.



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MORE VALUE ADDED

Make room: space saving tips

There are sexier home improvements than closet and cabinet organizers. But what other upgrade will simplify your life and boost the salability of your home? Here's the best gear for organizing stuff now and impressing buyers later. [\(more\)](#)

Take your home outside

An open-air "room" adds inexpensive living space that may come in handy at resale. And it needn't have a price tag as big as the great outdoors. [\(more\)](#)

5 Dumbest renovation fads

A remodeling trend may look good on paper, but it may not make your home more livable - or more valuable. These five alternatives will. [\(more\)](#)

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