

# HOME INSIDE OUTSIDE

CINCINNATI.COM

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The Enquirer / Cara Dweley

**Dave Dennis**, a certified energy rater and owner of Home Energy Checkup in Hamilton, tests a newly built Energy Star home's door for air leaks during a recent inspection.

## REACHING FOR THE ENERGY STAR

AREA BUILDERS CAN OFFER  
MORE FUEL-EFFICIENT HOMES TO  
MEET A TOUGHER STANDARD

By Amy Howell  
Enquirer staff writer

**T**hat should do it," says Dale Dennis, a certified energy rater and owner of Home Energy Checkup in Hamilton.

Dennis plugs a few numbers into a software program and begins disassembling a contraption that's sealing the front door with vinyl. Gene Kopaygorodsky, general manager of K Homes in West Chester Township, peels plastic tape off the air vents in the Liberty Township home.

With this final inspection on June 21, Kopaygorodsky became one of the first builders in Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to build an Energy Star Qualified home, according to the federal EPA's new guidelines, which went into effect Saturday.

Many are familiar with the Energy Star label as a symbol of energy efficiency stuck to the front of a furnace or dishwasher. But few are aware that new homes can display this label on their circuit breaker box - indicating the home is 15 percent more energy-efficient than a comparable home built to code.

"The promise of Energy Star Qualified homes is that by buying that home, a consumer is getting something that is much more energy-efficient than a code-built home," says Jonathan Passe, communications coordinator for the Energy Star Residential program.

But in many states, that wasn't the case.

"It's caught up to where, in some states, the Energy Star code was less than the state code," Dennis says.

The EPA was happy to raise the bar. Starting Saturday, Energy Star regulations are 30 percent more stringent than the initial guidelines, established in 1995. This reflects progress toward affordable, energy-efficient housing and serves as a benchmark for what's to come in residential construction.

E-mail [ahowell@enquirer.com](mailto:ahowell@enquirer.com)

Inside: Energy efficient homes being built in the region, H4

### Triple-door refrigerator features lots of cool extras

If you thought a refrigerator with French doors was fancy, LG Electronics' new three-door Panorama models might inspire you to stock the fridge with hors d'oeuvres, tea and crumpets.

The three-door design builds on several convenient ideas, placing a freezer drawer beneath side-by-side doors that open to adjustable slide-out shelves, two-piece utility bins and door shelving in the refrigerator.

The model houses the ice maker and an external ice and water dispenser in the eas-

ily accessible refrigerator door, rather than the freezer.

High-tech accoutrements include a "crisper" that controls the moisture level for fruits and veggies, exterior digital temperature controls, an alarm that signals when the door is left open and an airflow system for optimum cooling. The wine rack might come in handy for your next dinner party.

Panorama refrigerators are available in 21-, 22- and 25-cubic foot sizes.

Manufacturer's suggested retail price: \$1,499-\$2,799. Available at Home Depot, hhGregg and Best Buy.

Amy Howell



LG Electronics

### CITY LIVING



The Enquirer / Joseph Fuqua II

**Mike Uhlenhake** bought the Orchard Street building for \$17,500 13 years ago.

## Architect's home rose from the ashes

By Kym Kuenning / Enquirer contributor

A flat living space and a low budget raised Mike Uhlenhake's interest in a derelict building on Over-the-Rhine's Orchard Street. The building also posed quite a design challenge for the architect, a partner at Atelier 114 on East 13th Street. Uhlenhake bought the burned-out shell 13

years ago for \$17,500 and set to work transforming it into a two-family home. His ground-floor space includes a small living room and efficient kitchen. His bed is stored high above the entryway in a loft.

See CITY, Page H5

COVER STORY

# Efficient homes put through rigorous tests

By Amy Howell / Enquirer staff writer

**I** learned a lot building this house," Gene Kopaygorodsky, general manager of K Homes, says of his first Energy Star home, certified June 21. The Liberty Township home, which is on the market for \$285,000, is expected to save its owner 30-50 percent in utility bills – about \$712 per year, and release about 8,000 fewer pounds of greenhouse gases per year than a standard home of about the same size, says Dale Dennis, a home energy rater and owner of Home Energy Checkup in Hamilton.



This Energy Star house in Liberty Township was built by K Homes.

To qualify for the Energy Star label, builders incorporate energy-efficient construction practices, appliances and materials. A rater calculates the energy usage to determine whether the home will use less than a home built to state code.

A "code" home is rated 100, a home that consumes zero energy is rated 0 and an Energy Star home must receive an 85 rating or lower.

When the program was established in 1995, most states used the 1993 national Model Energy Code, and Energy Star homes were required to be 15 percent more efficient.

"Over the last few years, a number of states (including Ohio and Kentucky) have adopted the more stringent International Energy Conservation Code," Dennis says.

"That really upped the ante for what builders had to do to meet code," says Jonathan Passe, communications coordinator for the Energy Star Residential program.

The EPA responded by upping the ante again. According to the new regulations, Energy Star homes in the Midwest permitted on or after Saturday must be 15 percent more efficient than a home built to the 2004 code.

Before the drywall goes up, the rater performs tests to diagnose 17 common construction problems – such as insufficiently installed insulation and leaky duct systems.

Dennis found and corrected ductwork in this home's attic where about 30 percent of the air-conditioned air was escaping outside.

"The house would've sold and no one would've known," Dennis says. "It happens all the time."

The new guidelines also reward points for energy-efficient appliances, windows and light fixtures, and air conditioners with a seasonal energy efficiency rating that exceeds the new federal minimum – raised from 10 to 13 in January.

The final home inspection includes a "blower door" test for air leakage, now paired with a "duct blaster" test to determine how much conditioned air is lost outside the home.

After 2½ hours of diagnostics, Kopaygorodsky's home surpassed the requirements and received a 62 – indicating it is 38 percent more energy-efficient than a home built to Ohio code.

E-mail [ahowell@enquirer.com](mailto:ahowell@enquirer.com)



Kopaygorodsky

## The costs of efficiency

### Initial costs

High-performance windows: \$500  
 Air sealing: \$200  
 Tight ducts: \$200  
 Effective insulation: \$400  
 Air barrier details: \$500  
 Lighting/appliances: \$200  
 High-efficiency equipment: \$500  
**Total: \$2,500**

### Initial credits

Right-sized air conditioning unit: \$500-\$800  
 Reduced number of air conditioning units: \$500-\$1,000  
 Compact ducts: \$200-\$400  
 Reduced framing: \$200-\$400  
 Eliminate furnace: \$0-\$500  
**Total: \$1,400-\$3,100**

### Annual cost comparison

Utility savings: \$420  
 Additional mortgage: \$180  
**Total savings: \$240**

Source: Home Energy Checkup

## For more information

### Energy Star Qualified Home program

[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

### K Homes

[www.khomesonline.com](http://www.khomesonline.com)

### U.S. Department of Energy (state energy codes)

[www.energycodes.gov](http://www.energycodes.gov)

### Home Energy Rating System (HERS) and Certified Energy Raters

[www.natresnet.org](http://www.natresnet.org)

### Home Energy Checkup

[homeenergycheckup@fuse.net](mailto:homeenergycheckup@fuse.net)

## Qualified Energy Star homes

**16,500** built to date in Ohio  
**149** in Greater Cincinnati  
**680** in Northern Kentucky

Jonathan Passe, Energy Star Residential program

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- from **\$440** mo\* **lawrenceburg, in**  
RIVIERA \$90's - \$210's  
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Alison Morsch 812.537.9944
- from **\$449** mo\* **eastgate area/batavia twp, oh**  
TWIN SPIRES at LEXINGTON RUN \$90's - \$200's  
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- from **\$658** mo\* **green township, oh**  
BRIDGE POINT \$90's - \$200's  
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- from **\$554** mo\* **harrison, oh**  
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- from **\$539** mo\* **maineville/hamilton twp, oh**  
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- from **\$843** mo\* **mason, oh**  
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- from **\$582** mo\* **monroe, oh**  
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- from **\$554** mo\* **newtown, oh**  
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