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Sustainable Living

The Greened House Effect: Renovating Your Home with a Deep Energy Retrofit
Jeff Wilson
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Author describes how anybody can achieve “weatherization on steroids” for big home energy savings.

In his hands-on guide to energy-efficient renovations for homeowners, construction expert Jeff Wilson presents highly useful strategies that are not only doable for those with no remodeling experience, but also budget friendly and practical.

In *The Greened House Effect*, Wilson notes that his interest in the subject kicked off when he decided to renovate his seventy-year-old house. Motivated by the desire to cut his home’s energy costs, he began discovering a greater impact to “a deep energy retrofit,” in which changes to single homes could add up to far-reaching changes for the United States.

“I’m not talking about band-aid fixes or minor tweaks,” he writes. “I’m talking about a full-scale updating of older buildings to bring them up to 21st century green building standards for energy efficiency, comfort, and health.”

Described by Wilson as “weatherization on steroids,” a deep energy retrofit involves everything from redoing insulation to purchasing new appliances. Even focusing on one aspect of eco-renovation, such as patching up a house’s small cracks and drafts can result in less humidity during the summer, saving on air conditioning costs.

Using a writing style that blends passionate activism with step-by-step instruction, Wilson details how homeowners can design a deep energy retrofit, find financing, deal with roofs, manage basement moisture, and handle walls, doors, and windows. He also provides information on ultrahigh-efficiency additions that increase a home’s square footage without affecting its carbon footprint.

Throughout, Wilson acts as a knowledgeable, helpful construction Sherpa who covers a wide range of topics without sounding rushed. Many times, his personable tone feels like

neighborly advice instead of the more traditional, personality-free writing often found in how-to books. Also helpful, *The Greened House Effect* has ample photos for illustrating main points and smaller details. Even some of these show Wilson's friendly approach, like the photo of his young daughter with crowbar in hand, helping to demolish a basement wall.

For those who prefer extra credit projects, or have some construction experience, Wilson includes projects for integrating wind and micro-hydro power as well as solar panels. He makes a compelling argument for going beyond simple renovations with home projects, and seeing the bigger picture of energy independence.

Although Wilson's larger aims of economic security and environmental awareness are notable, for many homeowners, this guidebook will be most useful for offering practical, straightforward advice for renovations that create lasting effects. Sometimes, change literally begins at home.

Elizabeth Millard