

The Green Gauge

Engage in your homes potential

□ BY MARCUS RENNER □

Savvy homeowners and buyers realize that a green, energy-efficient home adds value while saving money and resources. What is the best way to find out if a home is efficient and sustainable? Created by the WNC Green Building Council, Green Gauge is a simple, innovative, low-cost assessment program working to help residents across North Carolina save money, reduce energy usage and live in

homes that are healthier for themselves and the environment.

Green Gauge is perfect for existing homes or new homes that don't use a rating system during



Marcus Renner

construction. During a Green Gauge Home Assessment, homes are rated for energy efficiency based on the U.S. Department of Energy's Home Energy Score (HES) criteria.

Each home receives a score on a scale of 1-10, a score of 10 indicating that it is incredibly efficient. Homes are also evaluated for a variety of other factors including water usage, indoor air quality and building material sustainability. After the assessment, participants receive a straightforward, comprehensive report with recommendations on how to improve upon home efficiency and sustainability.

During the Green Gauge Assessment, an Assessor will thoroughly examine all areas of the home including the interior, attic, basement, crawlspace and exterior. Windows and doors, walls, roof, foundations, heating systems and landscaping will be documented and assessed for energy efficiency. Diagnostic tools such as blower door analysis, infrared imaging and zonal pressure testing will pinpoint and quantify areas of air leakage. The assessment is a lot like taking your car to the mechanic; the house



Above: Holes in the ceiling can waste a lot of energy. Here interior walls are drawing in hot attic air. Attic air sealing will stop this. Below, left: A blower door is set up for a Green Gauge assessment. Air leakage will be tested. Below, right: Interior wall top plates and plumbing holes as seen from the attic. These gaps allow a lot of air to escape or enter the home. Kevin Bauguss photos



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is plugged into diagnostic equipment and given a thorough once over.

If the home receives a low score, don't worry. The assessment will list recommendations to improve the score and increase energy efficiency. Scores can be re-

calculated once the improvements are made. In fact, the Green Gauge Assessment will measure the potential carbon footprint reduction made once the improvements are in place.

One important outcome of an assessment is the discovery of is-

ssues such as mold, water leaks, and foundation problems. Left undiscovered, these findings can cause real and expensive damage to a home and affect the health of occupants. Green Gauge assessors look at a home with an eye for durability, as durability and longevity are an often overlooked sustainable attribute.

A Green Gauge report is a great way for home builders and sellers to document the "green" features and efficiency of a home. A high Home Energy Score is enticing to buyers as it confirms that they are purchasing an energy-efficient home. It can also be a valuable tool for potential homeowners who want to know how factors such as energy and water usage will impact their overall cost of homeownership. Not buying or selling? Green Gauge can help you identify ways to save money, increase comfort and indoor air

quality, reduce the home's carbon footprint and take advantages of local utility rebates.

To learn more or schedule your Green Gauge Assessment, visit www.wncgbc.org.

Marcus Renner has worked in most sectors of residential sustainable building for over 22 years. He owns Conservation Pros, a residential and commercial building performance retrofitting firm. With over 1,500 buildings weatherized and 1,000 energy audits, Marcus and Conservation Pros bring the most experience to your home or workplace.

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