



Rocco Sinisgalli, Owner and President of Oneida Builders, Inc., is striving to transform the way homeowners view their energy consumption. He purchased this 1970s era home with great potential in a beautiful Dunwoody neighborhood and had his award-winning remodeling firm transform it into a green masterpiece.

# Making A Difference

## Oneida Builders Creates Eco-Friendly Renovations

By Trish Stukbauer • Photography courtesy of Oneida Builders, Inc.

There are more than 100 million existing homes in the United States, and Rocco Sinisgalli, Owner and President of Oneida Builders, Inc., won't be satisfied until he transforms the way all home owners look at how they consume energy. "We're frankly never going to build as many new homes as we already have in place, so we need to find a better way to make those existing homes more efficient," says Sinisgalli, a Master Craftsman Certified Graduate Remodeler, Certified green professional and EARTHCRAFT certified remodeler. "We already have many of the programs in place to do that. Home performance with ENERGY STAR is in place. EarthCraft House is in place. LEED is in place. We just need to educate people about what can be done."

Five years ago, Sinisgalli renovated his own home to EarthCraft House standards and was amazed by the results. "I saw my energy bills reduced. I saw my home become more comfortable, and I saw a vast

improvement in my home's air quality."

To help clients and the public envision the possibilities, Sinisgalli purchased a 1970s era home with great potential in a beautiful Dunwoody neighborhood and had his award-winning remodeling firm transform the residence from "an energy pig into a green masterpiece," he describes. He then filmed the entire process to create a television show called *Going Green with Rocco*, which aired on a local station and is available through a link on his website. "In essence, I pretended that I was an average consumer and followed the same process they would go through. I went to the ENERGY STAR website, energystar.gov, found an assessor in my area and hired him to do an energy audit on the house. I compare the audit to an MRI of your home. It gives you a list of the major and minor things that can be improved and prioritizes them so that you can decide what's most important to you." ►

He feels that this is an essential step that allows homeowners to take a realistic approach to their project. “There are a lot of green options out there, and some are pretty far-fetched from what the average person can or even wants to do, like investing \$100,000 for solar panels or trying to take a home completely off the grid; it’s very unrealistic.”

One of the largest areas of concern in most older homes is leaky ductwork, which makes HVAC equipment work far less efficiently than it should. “Oftentimes we’ll take a realistic approach and rather than trying to replace all the ductwork, [which may require extensive demolition followed by reconstruction of walls and ceilings] we’ll instead look to the basement or attic and address those

areas, which can have a huge impact. Since this was a full remodel, we were able to take everything out [the old metal ductwork was recycled] and start over with new, efficient ductwork.” After the changes, a new ductwork test revealed a 44% improvement in the system’s efficiency.

Another improvement was gaining 700 square feet of attic storage space – simply by altering the insulation. “We replaced the old insulation with Icynene®, a blown-in spray insulation that’s very effective. That allowed us to remove the old attic blanket and put plywood on the floor to create additional storage space.” he notes. The additional storage space was particularly important since the footprint of the home did not change during the renovation process. ►

Throughout the residence, existing hardwood floors were refinished with water-based polyurethane, refreshing their appearance without releasing harmful toxins into the air.






The kitchen and baths received an environmental makeover as well. White cabinets brightened the dark, dated kitchen, while their eco-friendly construction and finish preserves the home's indoor air quality. Old plumbing fixtures were switched to water-saving models.

Other changes were highly visible, although their environmental benefits are not immediately apparent. A new roof, for example, is a beautiful addition, while the fact that it was made from recycled materials here in Georgia, which reduced the energy needed to transport it, makes it doubly green as well. Striking cabinets brightened the dark, dated kitchen. Their eco-friendly construction was kind to the environment, while their eco-friendly finish preserves the home's interior air quality. Likewise, existing hardwoods were refinished with water-based polyurethane. Decades-old appliances were replaced with ENERGY STAR models, while old plumbing fixtures were switched to conservation-minded models. A Metlund® Hot Water D'MAND® System further conserves water and energy by delivering it to the faucet far faster than a traditional model, so less water flows down the drain. (Turn to the Sizzle & Splash section for more detailed information on this feature.)

All in all, the home has made quite an impact on everyone who has seen it, from Realtors who have toured it, viewers who have seen the program and the neighbors who see it as motivation

to modify their own homes. The HERS Rating (Home Energy Rating Service) on this home was rated at 74, and the house tested 26% more efficient than a brand new home built to current energy standards; this is an magnificent accomplishment seeing that the home is 30 years old. Rocco believes this house is ahead of its time and everything that was implemented will one day become standard building practice. He is hoping that in the new stimulus bill, there will be tax incentives for homeowners, builders and remodelers that implement these energy-efficient methods and materials. "One neighbor has already improved the insulation in his attic, while another put in a hot water pump," Sinisgalli says. Rocco's next goal is to do an energy makeover and TV show on the Governors mansion. STAY TUNED 

*For more information on this energy-efficient home, which is currently available for sale, or to talk about your own project, visit [www.oneidabuilders.net](http://www.oneidabuilders.net) or call (770) 396-1002. Also feel free to visit [www.goinggreenwithrocco.com](http://www.goinggreenwithrocco.com) to view the show.*