

County offers incentive for green building practices

By [Dee Henry](#) | Hickory Daily Record

Builders and folks remodeling homes in Catawba County now have an additional incentive for using energy-efficient appliances and features in their work.

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners on Monday approved an adjustment to the county's Building Inspection Fee Schedule to add incentives for using green building practices. A percentage reimbursement of building permit fees will be refunded with proof that builders used green features.

That proof can come through Green Building certification given by several organizations or through a third-party inspection agency, said Jack Chandler, Public Services administrator with Catawba County. The homeowner will not be the only one benefiting, he said.

"Hopefully, this will turn out to be a good thing for Catawba County and its environment," Chandler said.

Board of Commissioners Chairwoman Kitty Barnes said she hopes the discount will result in more people thinking "green."

"I think it will help us get a broader number of people thinking about sustainability," Barnes said.

Barnes and her husband went green when they built their house three years ago by installing a geothermal heat pump, she said.

"The efficiency is so tremendously different than we had with natural gas," Barnes said. "It was more expensive when we put it in, but I'm confident it will pay off within five years."

Barnes said she is hopeful people will begin thinking about the long-term benefits, both in future savings and in ecological results, rather than initial cost.

"We have to start thinking outside of the box," she said. "And hopefully this will encourage people to go in that direction."

Under the new fee structure, new structures are eligible for a rebate of 25 percent of the blanket permit fee up to \$500 when the structure is certified by LEED, N.C. Healthy Built Homes, Energy Star, NAHB Model Green Building Home Guideline certification or National Green Building Standard certification.

Existing structures can get varying rebates when remodeling includes a geothermal heat pump, photovoltaic energy system, a solar hot water heater and/or a gray or rainwater collection system.

Residential and commercial structures are eligible for the rebates.

The addition to the fee schedule became effective Feb. 17.