

Making Garages Great

Because a garage door can occupy almost 30 percent of a home's front exterior, more homeowners are paying attention to that large, square space attached or next to their home.



Many garages are getting an update, for both design and energy-efficiency purposes. And homeowners are finding that once a garage is more energy-efficient, there are unexpected ways they can better utilize some of that extra space.

In terms of design, the carriage-door has made a comeback, with versions now available in less-expensive, low-maintenance materials such as steel. These doors feature wood-grain composite overlays or embossed patterns to heighten the carriage-house look. Steel doors are a popular choice because they are much easier to maintain than wood, and resist fading and rot due to the elements.



Classic raised panel steel or wood doors are also popular, with updating provided by decorative windows. For the most contemporary of home-styles, aluminum and even glass doors are available.

Energy-efficiency is an important consideration for homeowners, and energy tax credits may be available if you install a

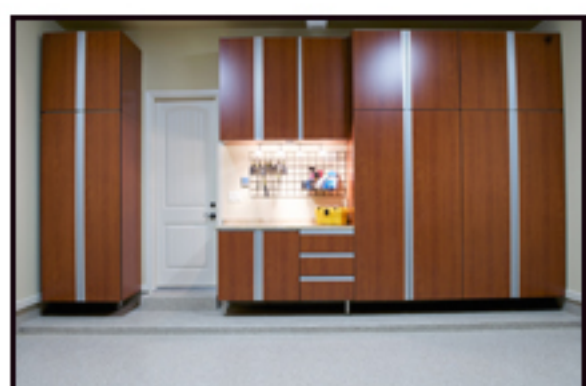
better-insulated garage door. (Tax credits reduce tax dollar-for-dollar). To be eligible for the tax credit, the purchased garage door must meet the following criteria:

- ➔ The door must be an insulated residential garage door, installed on an insulated garage.
- ➔ The door must have a U-factor (how well a material prevents heat-loss) equal to or less than 0.30, even if the door contains glazing.
- ➔ If the door contains windows (glazing), the door must offer a Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (measures how well a product blocks heat from the sun and is abbreviated SHGC) equal to or less than 0.30.
- ➔ The door perimeter must have a means to control air infiltration.
- ➔ The door must be expected to remain in service for at least five years and be a part of the taxpayer's principal U.S. residence.



The homeowner's tax credit is based on the total material cost of the purchase. The maximum credit is \$1500.

When looking to upgrade a garage door, one of the primary factors is R-value (ability to prevent heat loss). The higher the R-value, the higher the insulation, resulting in the most energy savings. A garage door insulated with polyurethane foam is considered one of the best choices, because it bonds to the door's metal skin. The bonding insures the metal skin won't separate from the insulation, resulting in air leakage.



Upon installation of a better garage door, some homeowners see the space contained within their garage in a different light. Some families choose to equip a garage with extra electrical outlets and phone jacks. In addition to traditional uses of a garage – storing cars and sports equipment – some garages are sporting a hobby area, a fitness

room, a home office, laundry room, extra kitchen storage, walk-in closet or laundry room. Other homeowners are thinking ahead and adding entry-ways that are wheel-chair accessible.