

New Family 'Green' House Built From The Ashes Up

By Andrea Aurichio | July 30, 2009, 9:44 am



The Dubin's new energy efficient "Green House" was inspired by Sandra Dubin's desire to recall the Lodge homes of Canada where she grew up. The house was designed by architects Richard "Rick" Stott and Craig Lee. *Photos courtesy of Richard Stott, Flynn-Stott Architects, Southampton*

Southampton - A state of the art environmentally friendly "Green House" is literally rising from the ashes of the remains left after a fire razed the Dubin home in Southampton last year a few days before Christmas leaving the family of five shattered and homeless during the holiday season while they tried to rebuild their lives and possibly their home.

In the true spirit of giving friends came forward offering help as the community rallied to soften the blow. Two of those friends happened to be architects. Craig Lee, of Lee Architecture in Sag Harbor was a college buddy who played team tennis with Dubin when the two men were students at Colgate University. Dubin went to Law School and is now practicing in Riverhead. Lee called his friend and offered his help immediately as did another long-time friend and architect, Richard Stott of Steelbone Design and Flynn Stott Architects, in Southampton. Stott, an Ironman triathlete was shocked by his friend's misfortune.

All three men shared a love of sports and the environment in addition to their interest in building green to save energy and reduce the carbon footprint. Dubin, no stranger to the field, taught courses in environmental law at Southampton College, while his architect friends kept one eye on the resurgence of wind and solar energy and the other on fine design.

At the time of the Dubin's misfortune, Stott was in the process of acquiring additional professional credentials by pursuing courses that would result in his newly acquired status as a LEEDS architect. LEEDS, or Leadership in



Frank Dalene founded the Hamptons Green Alliance by assembling a small group of local tradesman in the building, plumbing and heating and landscaping business to promote the construction of "green" buildings designed to increase energy efficiency. *Photo by Andrea Aurichio*

Energy and Environmental Design, encourages building practices that enhance sustainability and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

Meanwhile left homeless by the fire that destroyed their home the Dubins spent a week at his parents house during the holiday season before moving into a bed and breakfast in Southampton Village for a few weeks. Then a friend and client of Dubin's offered to rent his house to the family. The rental is close to the Dubin's former home making it easy for them to keep an eye on the job as construction gets underway. "We decided if we were going to do this we were going to do it right," Dubin said of his new home that will at the very least result in lower heating and electric bills when the family moves in next spring.

The Dubins, as it turns out, are not the only ones interested in their new house.

"It's a cool story," Stott said as he described the collaborative design process with fellow architect Lee. "We didn't fight about anything," Stott said from his office in Southampton. "We are both working towards the same goal," Lee said from his office in Sag Harbor. "For me, this is an opportunity to learn more about green building in a very direct way."

For Stott, the project is an opportunity to go where no man has gone before as this unique project moves forward. "To our knowledge no one in the world has successfully constructed a home with a carbon neutral footprint until now," Stott said.



Roy and Tim Dalene are involved in Telemark's groundbreaking project spearheaded by the Hamptons Green Alliance (HGA). The HGA "Green House" will serve as a prototype for future homes according to Frank Dalene, a life-long environmentalist.

Stott put the project together as much by design as by happenstance. Enter the Hamptons Green Alliance or HGA as it is known for short. The HGA was looking for a project according to builder Frank Dalene, the CEO of Telemark Construction and founding member of the HGA. Dalene, along with a group of contractors on the South Fork, formed

the HGA prompted by their desire to build green.

The small founding group includes Telemark, Connected Hearth, Delfino Insulation, Flanders Heating and Air Conditioning, SunStream, Excelsior Plumbing and Heating and TreeWise, a tree company committed to organic growing. Dalene intentionally kept his core group small when he set up the HGA.

"I've always been an environmentalist," Dalene said. Dalene's company will oversee construction on the Dubin project. The HGA had been looking for a project since summer of 2008. An email sent to the Peconic Chapter of the American Institute of Architects by the HGA last summer crossed Stott's desk but failed to attract his attention. Then the Dubin's house burned down. In a totally unrelated turn of events that ended up in a profound connection, the AIA received another email from the HGA in 2009. They were still looking for a project. "Then I put it together," Stott said. The goal is to build a net-zero energy home that does not require more energy to operate than it consumes.

The house will be energy self-sufficient relying on a geothermal heating system backed up by a photovoltaic system or "solar heating system" as well as by wind turbines. Both are strategically incorporated into the new home's design. The wind turbines will be situated on the roofline resembling the vents found on the roofs in old time barns still prevalent on the East End. The photovoltaic panels will blend into the roof, designed to camouflage the thin film panels. "They are lighter than I thought," Lee said of the solar panels that will be installed noting the roof will not require additional reinforcement to sustain their weight. The goal here is to make the electric meter run forward meaning the Dubins hope to find themselves in the enviable position of selling their surplus energy back to the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA).



Additional view of the new Dubin home.

The house will be constructed with materials designed to minimize heat loss and will include a rainwater harvesting system that will be used for irrigation. The Dubin's home will also be a smart house, incorporating the latest in electronic controls.

Deconstruction or the careful removal of materials from the site began two weeks ago. A lot of advance work preceded the arrival of the dumpsters that will hold carefully discarded materials as well as recyclables.

The most impressive aspect of the new Green House is team work according to everyone involved. The architects, builders, electricians, plumbers and landscapers all gathered to meet at Dalene's Bridgehampton office well before work began.

"That was impressive," Lee said echoing the rest of the "team." "We all got a chance to sit down together and discuss the project as it took shape." This cohesive approach referred to by the AIA as an "integrated project delivery or IPD is critical to achieving LEEDS Platinum status. The integrated approach stands in marked contrast to traditional building where the architect and the builder frequently do not communicate with each other or with the subcontractors on the job. "The electrician doesn't talk to the plumber," Dalene explained. "It was great to have everyone come together in the initial planning stages." The Dubins participated too. As in many households when construction is planned, Dubin's Canadian born wife Sandra played a large part in the design process. "She wanted the house to have a lodge look," Lee said.

The 4,000 square foot house is being rebuilt in the original footprint with a small addition included.

"We decided if we were going to rebuild we were going to do it right. I wanted to build a house that put as much green technology in it as possible," Dubin said. "This is pretty cool stuff." Dubin, along with a handful of other members of his law firm, has taken to driving a Prius to work.

The Dubins moved into their house located on a private road in Water Mill two and half years ago. They purchased the house from a previous owner who moved in when the house was first built five years ago giving them the advantage of a continuous history of utility bills that will provide a basis of comparison once they move into their new home. Among the energy saving features will be the installation of motion detectors that will automatically turn lights off when no one is moving around in a room. "The lights will go off automatically when the kids walk out of their rooms and leave the lights on," Dubin said.

A loss has turned into a gain for a family displaced by fire. "I am glad no one was hurt," Dubin said as he credited his wife with keeping the family going during a difficult time made easier by the engrossing project. "She was the one who kept us all going," he said. "The kids never missed a day of school and we moved on."

Dubin's son Jeremy, an honors student at Southampton who excels in math and science turned the family's misfortune into a school project after he worked closely with Stott as the architect pulled the project together. His class will watch the project take shape and become well versed in building green. "It helped him get over the shock of coming home from school and seeing the house destroyed," Stott said as plans to rebuild a new, improved, net zero house moved forward.