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Hamptons Green Alliance Builds a Green Home



The Hamptons has long been considered the summer playground for the rich and famous. To many year-round residents of Eastern Long Island, however, it is also home to people with a fierce loyalty to the environment and a dedication to protecting the natural beauty that surrounds them.

When the Hamptons Green Alliance (HGA), a group of local tradesmen who organized to promote sustainable design, proposed a net-zero energy, carbon neutral home, to the architectural community, many local architects searched for a suitable project.

On December 22, 2008, a Southampton home became engulfed in flames and was destroyed. The tragedy would find the attention of the Hamptons Green Alliance through the efforts of a friend of the homeowner, fellow environmentalist and local architect, Richard F. Stott.

Stott, AIA, LEED AP (Accredited Professional) and the owner of Steelbone Design Company and Flynn Stott Architects, P.C., reached out to his friend in a time of need and hosted a meeting that brought together the homeowner, a general contractor, Telemark (founder of HGA), and another architect friend of the homeowner, Craig Lee, of Lee Architecture. Lee and Stott will lead the team that has designed and planned for the construction of a residence that will set the standard for sustainable carbon neutral building in the future.

Stott discussed the benefits of building a LEED certified structure and the homeowner, with their natural inclination to be environmentally responsible, agreed. Stott also became aware that one of the owner's children had taken the loss of the house and his room very hard. He began a dialogue with the 13-year-old about the LEED for Homes process and the child responded with a keen interest. The boy in turn shared his new passion with his teacher in his honors science class and Southampton High School began taking an interest in green building in the



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Hamptons. A special project evolved that will allow the student to report to his class on the design and recreation of what promises to be a very special home.

WHAT DOES LEED CERTIFIED MEAN?

The USGBC (United States Green Building Council) has created a rating system, LEED, (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Green Building Council members, representing every sector of the building industry, developed and continue to refine this international rating system. The "LEED for Homes" rating system addresses eight major areas: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, innovation and design process, location and linkages and awareness and education.

Attaining LEED certification is a challenging endeavor where various levels of accomplishments are rewarded via a points system. The highest level of achievement is platinum, the goal of this project.

WHAT IS A NET- ZERO ENERGY HOME?

It is a home that doesn't require more energy to operate than it consumes. The home's energy must be created in a sustainable way such as generating electricity and hot water through the use of solar power - photovoltaics for electricity and solar thermal for hot water. The use of geothermal (ground source heat pump) technology will be used for heating and cooling. To minimize the amount of energy required to heat or cool a home, the structure would be designed with advanced, high-performance building strategies and take advantage of passive heating and cooling design techniques.

WHAT IS CARBON NEUTRAL?

President Barack Obama has indicated that his administration is supportive of "Cap and Trade legislation." This will bring to the forefront of our society the concept of carbon neutrality and the idea that we, the United States, must reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases to diminish the global warming effects associated with increased levels of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases.

In essence, everything we use, own, or consume has a carbon footprint. Until recently there has been no method of scientifically establishing the actual carbon footprint across the broad spectrum of goods and services.

The president of Telemark, Frank Dalene, has created the first indexing system and methodology to establish an objective and scientific way of measuring a carbon footprint. This idea is an integral concept in establishing a standard in the way a carbon footprint can be scientifically and accurately measured. It is of the utmost importance, that a basis for this methodology be established. Without it, the claim of carbon neutrality is without merit and often subjective.

To our knowledge, no one has endeavored to create a home with a carbon neutral footprint on the east coast of the US. To do so will require that the goals of zero energy are met. We must also be careful to select

building materials that are environmentally sustainable. To offset the inability to be carbon neutral, it is the intent of the builder to produce more electricity than is consumed and purchase carbon offsets as required.

By achieving the above goals the Hamptons Green Alliance will deliver to the homeowner a LEED Platinum Certified, zero energy, carbon neutral home. While this project is a groundbreaking endeavor, we believe documenting this effort will create a model for others to follow or adopt as best practice in the future.

WHO WILL BUILD SUCH A HOME AFFORDABLY?

In February of 2008, Telemark Inc, a 30-year-old Bridgehampton based general contractor reached out to five other building related firms with the intent to form a not-for-profit with the mission of providing the public with information concerning how to save energy in homes. In addition, the founding members would create an online resource where one could find information required to build energy efficient homes. The group created The Hamptons Green Alliance with a Web site - hamptongreenalliance.org.

During one of their meetings, an HGA member made the point that the group needed to do more than just provide information, "we need to apply our knowledge." To illustrate their community commitment, HGA agreed to build a home on favorable economic terms for a deserving client provided the client would agree to have the project filmed and documented. After various meetings with the client, architects, general contractor, USGBC, and all HGA members, a plan has come together which creates a high performance building system that includes some of the following attributes: high performance sealed building envelope, geothermal heating and cooling, thin film photovoltaic solar power technology, wind power, rainwater harvesting system for irrigation, evacuated tube solar based hot water system and smart home technology utilizing the latest in electronic controls.

Documenting the project will provide insight into the world of sustainable building, provide an understanding of the various components required to create a zero energy home, educate the viewer about carbon neutrality, focus on how carbon is measured, and provide a general understanding of the LEED for Home process. We will also be able to illustrate that good building science is not complex and expensive but understandable and cost justified.

The story of how an interest in building science and sustainable building can impact an adolescent boy's life is heartwarming, but the benefactors are indeed each and every one of the participants. We believe the human-interest aspect of how good can evolve from tragedy adds realism to what has occurred and is an important component of the story, but the whole story is much deeper. In the end, all the participants will come away with a meaningful educational experience and the gratification of building a stronger, more sustainable community.

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