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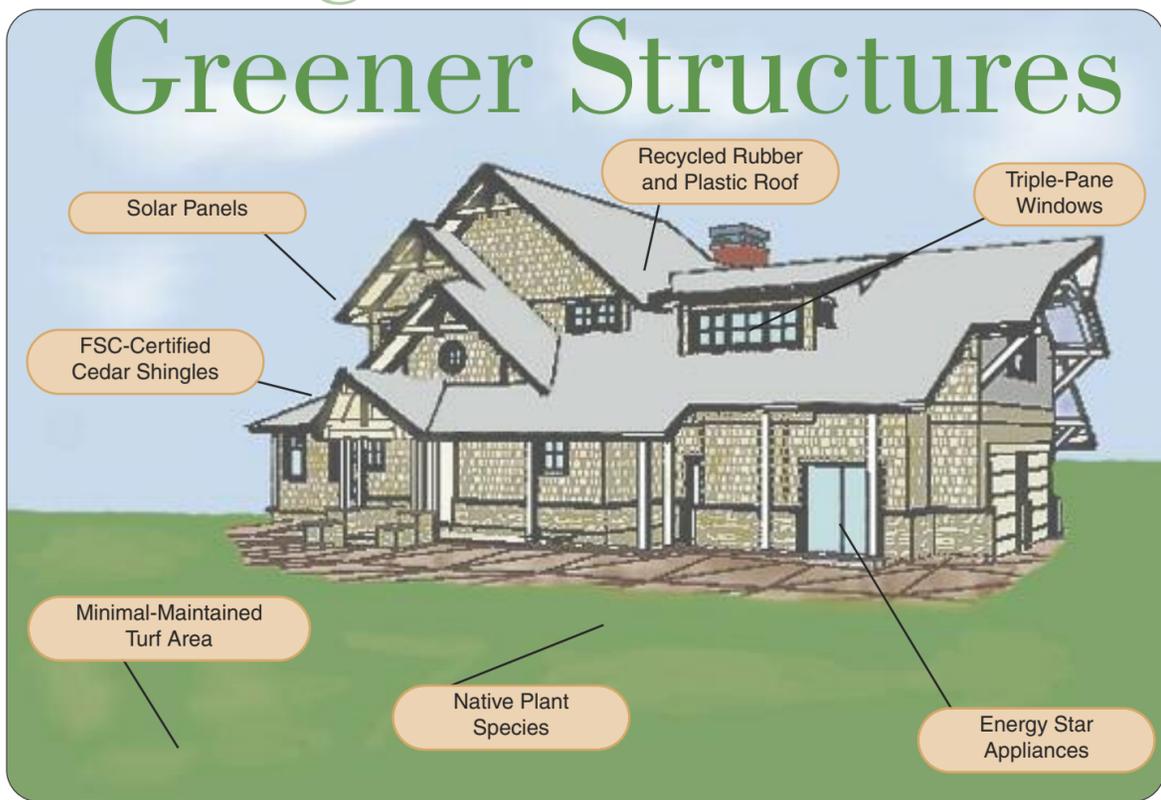
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Moving on to Greener Structures



New Year, New Look

Dear Readers: It is with great pleasure that we introduce a new chapter in the history of the New Canaan News. Beginning with today's issue, our look has changed to provide additional space for more news and feature stories and larger photographs. We will still continue to give you everything you need to know about your community. The New Canaan News always has strived for excellence, and with our new look, we just got even better. Our reason for the changes is simple — as our community has grown, we needed to grow too. You have asked for more and we will fulfill your request. Please take a few minutes to look through this week's issue and subsequent ones and let us know what you think. You may e-mail your comments to the editor, Ashley Varese, at avarese@bcnnew.com or the general manager, Michelle McAbee, at mmcabee@bcnnew.com.

Contributed rendering The photo to the left is a rendering of Etta and Nate Kantors' new eco-friendly home, which is being built on Trinity Pass road. The house is expected to be finished in September.

The Greenest House in Town

By Vinti Singh vsingh@bcnnew.com

To Etta Kantor, photovoltaic cells are beautiful. They represent the awesome energy of the sun, which gives the planet 10,000 times more energy than it needs. As they were designing their future house, her husband, Nate, asked if some shrubbery couldn't perhaps hide the large black panels on the ground? But Etta flatly denied his request, saying she wanted the cells to be seen by all.



Etta Kantor stands in front of the green house she and her husband, Nate, are building on Trinity Pass Road.

Some residents are embracing green homes

By Vinti Singh vsingh@bcnnew.com

As the green movement becomes more en vogue, many New Canaan homeowners are embracing environmentally friendly technologies such as solar panels and geothermal heating — as long as it fits into their dream home vision. "There is an aesthetics-versus-green fight," Arnold Karp, president of Karp Associates in New Canaan, said. "People put a lot of money into their homes, so they want their exact wish."

Family Installs Geothermal Heat

By Vinti Singh vsingh@bcnnew.com

A local family is pioneering new technologies in New Canaan. Tom and Susan Mackey, who live on Frogtown Road, recently installed a geothermal heating system in their home and plan to get solar panels in the next few years.



The graphic above displays a geothermal heating system home geothermal heating systems.

"We wanted to look at those things that were economically feasible for us rather than overspending on exotic technology," Tom Mackey said. "So the geothermal system was one of those things where yes it was more expensive, but that's depending on your view of where energy prices can go in the future. And secondly you're feeling the gratification of getting away from traditional fossil fuels." Their builder, Arnold Karp, said they are one of the first families in the area to get modern geothermal heating. A few local homes have geothermal systems from the 70s. Tom Mackey's job in the shipping business often takes him to Scandinavia — which is where he first learned about

ous and on the road to find out more," he said. A geothermal system uses the constant temperature of the earth as an infinite source of heating or cooling. Traditional heating systems use heat found in outside air. Pipes filled with fluid pick up or release heat deep into the ground. A heating pump inside the house transfers the heat through forced air or water. The system requires a substantially higher initial investment than more traditional systems, but over the long-term, it saves money and is much more energy efficient. Two factors decide how expensive geothermal system will be in a particular home: square footage of the space you have to heat and how deep you have to drill into the ground. The Mackeys needed 10 150-foot wells to provide for the 6,500-square-foot house and 2,500-square-foot basement. Given oil prices when they first decided to invest in the project in 2006, the

"I had heard about it becoming more common or more practical in the States and that was just enough to get me curi-

Contemporary colonial-style houses are abundant in New Canaan, but their peaked roofs, dormer designs and trimming often clash with energy efficiency. Solar panels, for example, are difficult to install on a roof with reverse gables and shed dormer roofs, common features on colonial homes. Many estate homes have grandiose windows to capture stunning views, but glass allows large volumes of heat to escape. "New Canaan would never be a leader in green building because of objections to features like windmills and ponds," Karp said. "Features such as those work better in the West." Yet a representative from Build Green Connecticut said, "quite a lot of interest in our program comes from Fairfield county." One of the most environmentally sound practices — building smaller homes that use less energy — is practically unthinkable in a town where many homes are more than 20,000 square feet. Homes that are 4,000 feet and greater consume about 155 million BTUs a year, according to the federal government's Energy Information Administration. A few solar panels will barely make a dent in the energy consumption of a 20,000-square-foot

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## Coming soon: The greenest house in New Canaan

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is success," Etta Kantor said. "For me, it's about not being wasteful, lessening your impact and living in harmony with nature."

The Kantors' dream house, a sustainable paradise on 4.6 acres, is currently under construction on Trinity Pass Road in New Canaan. When it is completed around September, Etta Kantor predicted it will get a LEED Platinum rating, the highest honors in green building.

The home will be heated by the solar panels and a wood pellet stove that runs on wood chips and sawdust. Some rooms will have radiant heating. The Kantors will also install a back-up propane system, but plan to never use it.

The roof will be made from recycled rubber and plastic. The insulation will be made of recycled newspaper. The shingles, beams, framing wood and floors are made of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood or antique reclaimed oak.

Rainwater will be harvested to irrigate the property and used water from showers and sinks will be reused in the toilets. The master bedroom will have a compost toilet, which will decompose human waste so it can be used as fertilizer on the grounds, where Etta Kantor plans to have fruit and nut orchards.

Etta Kantor is extremely involved with the building process, making almost daily trips to the construction site. She walked through the wooden frame Monday, while a mason worked on the wood stove. As she pointed out the different features, one thing was strikingly obvious. The rooms in the 5,000-sqaure-

foot dwelling were not cavernous in size.

Earlier, when in her current 8,000-sqaure-foot rental home on Indian Rock Road, Etta Kantor said, "the idea is we got rid of the rooms we don't use. For instance, there's living rooms and dining rooms you only use, like usually once or twice a year. We don't have that anymore. We have one great room that's connected to a dining area and a kitchen."

The master bedroom, too, was tiny by estate standards, but Etta Kantor pointed out they only plan to sleep in it. People have gotten accustomed to the idea that bigger is better, she said. But the result is often wasted space, space that needs to be heated and cooled. Her house may be smaller but all the space will be used efficiently.

Etta Kantor was ready to build her dream house in 2003, but the timing wasn't right. So she started small by getting a green car instead. Etta Kantor converted a Volkswagon Jetta to run on vegetable oil, which she gets for free from Chinese restaurants.

"I think I got a lot of attention at the time because ... I was a grandmother picking up oil from a restaurant and filtering it," she said. "And it wasn't that I couldn't afford to buy fuel. I was living in a big house, but I wanted to stop relying on resources that are limited because that's just insane to me."

Etta Kantor was invited to local schools to show children how her car worked. She made T-shirts for the young students and put together a presentation on sustainability. She told the kids how they could be "planetarians," or



Amy Mortensen/Staff photographer

**Etta Kantor, above, goes through the blueprints of her new home, which will feature everything from a compost toilet, triple-pane windows, crushed stone and insulation under the basement floor and window overhangs to shade from summer sun. Below is a photo of the house, which is expected to be finished by September.**

humanitarians who cared for the planet.

When the house is built, Etta Kantor plans to open it up for tours so others can learn about her sustainable home. She also plans to put up informational signs around the house, so it can be somewhat of an exhibit.

However, Etta Kantor did stress that she did not only design the house to be a model for green living. It is her dream house first and foremost.

"I think we have a beautiful house," Kantor said. "I think anyone who will see it will not think you have to compromise beauty for sustainability because there are

choices in everything."

The house will have a "rustic" look when it is done, and have the feel of the Adirondacks. Etta Kantor incorporated beams and exposed wood to achieve a woodsy look. And she compromised with her husband to make sure the house fit his desires as well.

"He likes the pool heated to a high temperature in the summer and that's very wasteful," Etta Kantor said. "But he agreed we're going to have a high cover over it so we can cover it every night. It's an automatic cover and it will keep the heat in so that at least you're not wasting a lot of that."

Nate Kantor said he is not as avid an environmentalist as his wife, but has a deep respect for her ideals and supports her goals. Yet he is a little leery of the compost toilet in the master bedroom.

"We'll give it a try," Nate Kantor said. "I made provisions so if it doesn't work the way it's supposed to work, the



plumbing is there so we don't have to rip up the whole house. And I've threatened the guy that's putting it in," he joked.

Etta Kantor will use the composted manure, which is safe once it is processed by beneficial bacteria, in her orchards. To her, composting is important because "our country is only 200 years old and over 60 percent of our soil is damaged." Etta Kantor said she is willing to have people help tend the orchards and share in the harvest, and wants to donate her surpluses

to shelters and food banks. Her house will also have a root cellar, so she can store and preserve parts of her harvest for the rest of the year.

Some environmentally friendly choices have added as much as 50 percent to building costs, Etta Kantor said, but she hopes to see some of those costs realized in lower electricity bills. When the solar panels generate more energy than the house needs, the electricity company will buy it, so Kantor hopes to net zero in energy costs. Other costs, like higher prices for FSC wood, provide a sense of gratification that cannot be quantified with a dollar amount.

"So for me, it's not about payback," Etta Kantor said. "It's really about - I would love to live like the indigenous people. It's being conscious of what you're taking and what you're giving back."