

## Local News



## Going Green in Sussex, Pt. 1

**By Adam Huber and Patrick Varine**

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*[Editor's note: this is the first in a three-part series, focusing on companies that are "going green," using environmentally-friendly technology or helping people to cut down on energy usage. The first part explores Sussex homebuilders.]*

"The last thing the county and the planet need is another average

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homebuilder,” said Insight Homes Owner Rob Lisle.

Lisle began his construction career as a partner in the 36 Homes Company, “and initially, it seemed to be a really bad industry,” he said.

“We wanted to try and find a way to build a better home.”

So, in honor of his company’s name – “Which everyone decided was way too goofy,” he said of the name change to Insight Homes – the company began building a string of 36 houses, adjusting their building methods with each to try and achieve peak efficiency.

“With our 22nd home, we found that we had built something that was 53 percent more efficient than the average house,” Lisle said. “And we did it at under \$100 per square foot.”

How?

In the beginning, Lisle said the company was purely focused on energy efficiency, taking the following measures (and more) to create a house that is easier on the planet and the wallet:

- A “mani-block” water-heating system that can save up to 2,600 gallons of hot water per year by running individual, proper-sized lines to faucets in the house, “so that instead of taking four minutes of running water while you’re waiting for it to get hot, a three-eighths-inch line is running directly from the water heater, so it only takes 45 seconds,” Lisle said.
- Utilizing variable-speed blowers in home heating and air-conditioning systems, “similar to the heater in your car,” Lisle said. Insight also uses exclusively metal ductwork, “rather than fiberglass, which has the potential to trap a lot more contaminants in your ductwork.”
- Ahead of the 2009 ban on installing air conditioners with R-22 freon, Lisle and Insight builders use 410-A freon units, “which cost a couple hundred dollars more, but it’s more stable, there are less leaks and better compression,” he said.
- Installing 97.5 percent efficient gas furnaces that keep air moving continuously through the house, and adjusting on-the-fly in two separate stages, one for the average cold night “and another for that coldest night of the year.”
- American Lung Association-certified “health homes,” that achieve better air quality in the ways that the home is humidified and pressurized.

And before an Insight home is sold to a buyer, employees do duct-blasting tests to ensure minimum leakage in the ductwork, test the doors for leaks and do a complete-home thermal scan to identify air leaks and insulation pockets.

Lisle and Insight have joined up with Vision to provide efficient, attractive homes, but clean energy doesn't have to be a group undertaking.

Through the efforts of the Delaware Renewable Energy Company (DREC) – an Ocean Atlantic company – individual residents and businesses can do their part while making strides to become energy independent.

For the past year now, DREC has been working to bring solar and wind power systems to Sussex County. Its employees have undergone training and certification in Florida and North Carolina, and the company works with the state to help fund clean energy projects.

“We've been trying to get greener in our [Ocean Atlantic] companies for the last year,” DREC partner Justin Healy said.

But Healy and crew are doing more than just talking the talk.

Healy was one of the company's first customers, having a solar power system installed at his home, and Ocean Atlantic Associates is scheduled to lead the way on the commercial side with a system at its Rehoboth office.

They're not the only ones looking to go green, however.

“The interest in it has been terrific,” Healy said, adding that DREC recently launched a marketing campaign for the clean energy systems.

Although the systems offered by DREC won't give you 100 percent energy independence, they do provide about 35 to 45 percent of your daily energy needs and provide other benefits, Healy said.

“I have definitely become acutely aware of how much energy I'm using,” he said. At certain times of day the meter can even be seen going backward, providing savings later because of net energy use charges.

Prices on the systems vary and aren't exactly cheap, but the state pays for half of the cost through its Green Energy Fund, and Healy estimates that residential systems pay for themselves within 9-10 years and commercial systems within five years.

“When you look at the legislation in Delaware – compared to other states – it's really a progressive program,” he said. “It's actually been pretty quick,

and the state's been pretty great to work with.”

To learn more about DREC and its clean energy systems, visit [www.delawarerenewableenergy.com](http://www.delawarerenewableenergy.com) or call 302-227-1337. For more information about Insight Homes, call 349-9480.



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