



# green pieces

the sCOOp On sustaInaBility 2009

AS SEEN IN GREEN HOME 2009,  
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i don't care whether you're driving a hybrid or an su V. if you're headed for a cliff, you have to change direction.

President Barack Obama

This Fairfield County Bank building in Westport, CT, is a candidate for LEED Gold certification.



## Back to the Future

By Amanda Bergen

The professionals at Doyle Coffin give new meaning to sustainable design

One of the best ways to understand this modern notion of sustainable design is to look to the past. The people who built houses a century ago were probably not giving much thought to their carbon footprint, but out of necessity they often created sustainable homes.

Small historic homes are often sturdy, well-ventilated, naturally lit, and made from local resources. Now that's sustainable design.

Doyle Coffin Architecture, based in Ridgefield, CT, has made bridging the gap between historic homes and modern building practices a hallmark of its architectural firm. "We look to the past

for the fundamental building practices that propelled sound, practical, and efficient design forward to this day," says John Doyle, a partner in the firm. "Those principles are the basis for good sustainable design now as we seek to conserve energy and integrate modern materials to create long lasting and healthy living environments."

Lately it seems everyone seems to know a lot about green homes. But Doyle Coffin was building "green" homes long before they became popular. Partners John Doyle and Peter Coffin have always felt it's important to work with an experienced professional when it comes to building in sustainability. "We've always sought

to ensure that a new home sits harmoniously within its contextual environment," says Doyle, "and with the wide range of new technology, materials, and resources available in the industry today, we're able to combine aesthetically rich design with systems that promote energy efficiency, and air quality as well as other aspects of sustainability for the long-term."

Doyle recently became a LEED-certified architect, certified to design buildings that meet some of the most rigid standards in environmentally sustainable construction. In fact, Doyle Coffin designed the new Fairfield County Bank building in Westport, CT, for which they are aiming for LEED Gold certification. LEED is a green-building rating system that sets guidelines in six areas of building: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and finally, innovation and design process. The bank building, which was constructed with minimal impact to its surrounding site, is a brick, traditional Adams-style design composed with largely local materials.

"The concept of green building and sustainable design must be a multi-disciplined, calculated effort by all parties involved in

a project, whether residential or commercial," adds partner Peter Coffin. "The owner and the design team—architect, landscape architect, civil, mechanical and electrical engineers—as well as the lighting consultant must synchronize efforts to achieve a truly 'green' outcome."

The field is still fairly complex and requires a coordinated approach. Professionals, fluent in the field, can evaluate the relationships between cost and benefit over time and perform a lifecycle cost analysis of each system or product. They can also provide careful construction budget control, which is an important component of the process.

Experience is also critical in evaluating and making design recommendations that provide the highest possible benefit, relative to cost, for clients. Setting goals, prioritizing needs, and designing the appropriate solutions are all part of the process. Professional architects can guide their clients through this maze by studying and researching products and methods, and then advising their clients what would or wouldn't suit their homes.

"Clients recognize the value of having a carefully planned approach to green building and the importance of having a well-versed pro-

fessional on board to navigate the constantly evolving and complex green movement," says Doyle. "Especially in this economic climate, people seek real value from every dollar in their budget and we are highly conscientious and serious about delivering on this." \*

## green glossary

**Biodiesel** a fuel made from vegetable oil that can be used in diesel engines.

**carbon footprint** a measure of the total amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse-gas emissions that a product, service, or lifestyle produces, all of which contribute to global warming.

**compact fluorescent light Bulb (cfl)** an energy-efficient alternative to incandescent light bulbs.

**energy star** a program of the u.s. environmental protection agency and the u.s. Department of energy that promotes the use of energy-efficient products and services.

**geothermal energy** energy generated by heat stored beneath the earth's surface, which includes natural steam, hot water, hot rocks or lava.

**LEED** Leadership in energy and environmental Design, a green-building-certification program developed and administered by the u.s. Green Building council.

**off-gas** the evaporation of volatile (usually toxic) chemicals from the surface of a material.

**phantom power** also known as "phantom load"; refers to the power drawn by appliances and electronics even when they're switched off or not in use.

**photovoltaic** the technology that transforms the sun's radiation to electricity.

**sustainable** the use of natural resources to meet present needs, without compromising those of future generations.

**wind power** energy that is generated by the wind. Ideas range from large turbines already in use to storing wind as compressed air.

Source: li Vescience.com

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