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## **Wonderland Hill Resident Organizes Neighbors for Energy Audits, Insulation, and Solar Improvements**

*By J.C. Martel*



**“For most of my adult life, I have been interested in conserving energy and resources and have recently become intrigued (my wife says obsessed) with alternative energy,” says Wonderland Hill resident, Doug Smith. He would come home from work and talk to his wife, Ellen, about energy efficiency and the possibility of adding solar and making other improvements to their townhome. Finally, Ellen suggested that he present his ideas to the HOA board, so he did. At first, Doug was skeptical that his homeowner’s association (HOA) would go for it. It turns out that energy bills are something that bind us all, and are some bills we all think about reducing. At the meeting an ad hoc committee was formed with Doug at the helm.**

Conversations with neighbors he'd never talked to in 17 years of living at Wonderland Hill occurred in the parking lot, on front stoops, and at board meetings. One day Doug's wife, Ellen, received an email from the city of Boulder's ClimateSmart team, part of an initiative to organize neighborhoods for carbon emissions reduction. Doug asked ClimateSmart team member, Andrew Basque, along with Center for Resource Conservation (CRC) Energy Division Director, Debbie Fox, to visit Wonderland Hill and give a presentation on sustainability and the programs available to homeowners. With a sign-up sheet in hand, Doug and committee members Rajul Pandya and Chappell Marmon rallied many of his neighbors to enroll in the Residential Energy Audit Program (REAP), one of several residential programs offered through the CRC, and explore solar installations.

To date nine of Doug's neighbors have had a REAP audit completed for their homes and three more are scheduled. Similarly, nine homeowners are in various stages of completing contracts for solar installations.

The REAP audit, partially subsidized by cities and towns within Boulder County, gave these homeowners a Whole Home Analysis of their home's energy use. Among the inspections done, professional energy auditors performed blower door tests to accurately identify air leakages, checked insulation values in the attics, wall, and crawlspace, and inspected heating and cooling equipment and windows. This data was compiled into an easy-to-understand report along with recommendations for improvements and provided to each homeowner.

After the audit, Wonderland Hill neighbors compared reports and found that many of the townhomes could benefit immediately from similar improvements such as weather-stripping around doors and windows, insulating attic hatches, sealing dryer vent and pipe penetration points, sealing of the sill at the foundation, and increasing attic insulation from code R-30 to R-49.

Doug and his neighbors are in the process of soliciting bids from contractors to complete these simple but beneficial improvements. They anticipate an immediate reduction in their energy bills over the cold months and a quick payback on their overall investment. By organizing these improvements as a group, not only will they receive a group discount from their contractor of choice, but they will also have the opportunity to discuss the range of products, technologies, and methods of installation available to them. Additionally, they will share knowledge about rebates and tax incentives, such as the insulation rebate available through the 2008 Insulate Colorado Program, which includes a 20% rebate (up to \$300) for insulation installation and air-sealing.

If, like Doug and his neighbors, you have interest in energy efficiency either individually or as a neighborhood, the Center for ReSource Conservation (CRC) can help. The nonprofits' Residential Energy Audit Program (REAP), 2008 Insulate Colorado Program, and other programs are available to you. For more information or to enroll, visit the CRC's website at [ConservationCenter.org](http://ConservationCenter.org).

**You can also gain knowledge of energy efficiency first-hand on Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Boulder County Solar & Green Home Tour, where 14 Boulder residents who have integrated energy efficiency into their homes will open them to the public. You can also attend a workshop on energy efficiency offered throughout the following week in the evenings as part of Boulder County Solar Week. To register and learn more about Boulder County Solar Week's home tour and workshops, visit [ConservationCenter.org/E\\_SolarWeek](http://ConservationCenter.org/E_SolarWeek) or call (303) 999-3820 x218.**