

Selling Sustainability

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Photo Courtesy: Aspen Core

In a place tucked into one of the most majestic pockets of the world—surrounded by natural beauty, national forest land and protected open space—living green is the way of life. With renewable energy roots dating back to the 1980s when the city built the Maroon Creek and Ruedi hydroelectric plants, Aspen is undoubtedly a model citizen in how communities can reduce the carbon footprint of its residents.

In 2015, Aspen reached a major milestone in achieving 100 percent renewable energy to power its electric utility—the third city in the nation to reach such a designation. While the City of Aspen’s [Climate Action Office](#) leads the charge, the [Community Office for Resource Efficiency \(CORE\)](#) —an independent non-profit organization— has helped teach Roaring Fork Valley residents how to conserve energy in their own homes. In 2000, this became the first program of its kind in the world.

Funded in part by the Renewable Energy Mitigation Program (REMP), CORE distributes funds in the form of [rebates](#) and [grants](#) and has awarded more than \$8.2 million to the community for smart energy compliance. In 2011, CORE launched its official home energy assessment program to increase efficiency awareness and implementation even more.

With **Aspen Snowmass Sotheby's International Realty's** prospective homebuyers weighing sustainability in their purchasing decisions now more than ever, we reached out to CORE's Kate Henion, BPI (Building Performance Institute) building analyst and marketing manager for her advice. Here are Kate's top tips to help clients going through the process of selling or buying a property in Pitkin County:

1. A home energy assessment is the first step. The assessment looks at the whole picture of your home— heating systems, windows and insulation levels. It provides you with a comprehensive report outlining opportunities for energy improvements that are specific to your home. Plus, homeowners get free “quick fix” installations and combustion analysis testing.
2. Once you get the report, give CORE a call to go over the top priorities for the home. CORE offers free energy advising and cash-back rebates and its knowledgeable Energy Advisors can connect you with local, qualified contractors and help you with utility rebates.
3. Easy projects to knock-off first include air sealing & insulation. By air sealing and insulating your home correctly, you can [establish a thermal boundary](#), heating and cooling only your desired living spaces.
 - Swapping out your incandescents for LEDs is another no-brainer, considering they [use 75% less energy](#).
 - Controls, like programmable thermostats, can save on your monthly utility bills. Smart thermostats provide you with those same savings, but with the added convenience of controlling your home by phone.

Since the program's inception, CORE has performed 2,106 assessments and issued 1,380 rebates in the Roaring Fork Valley. Homeowners are eligible for up to \$1,000 in rebates for energy efficiency upgrades, up to \$5,250 for renewable energy, and larger properties are offered custom rebates.

Thanks to Aspen's forward-thinking approach to sustainability and the work being done by organizations like CORE, new-build homes are also incorporating environmentally-conscious design elements from the start. One standout example of just how green a residential project can get? “Game On,” the personal home of John Rowland and Sarah Broughton, principals of their eponymous, award-winning architecture and interior design firm [Rowland + Broughton](#).

Spanning 4,291 square feet on a small parcel in Aspen's idyllic West End, the “modern interpretation of the historic homes from the turn-of-the-century that comprise much of the neighborhood” is LEED Gold Certified—the most widely used green building rating system and a globally recognized symbol of sustainability achievement.

It's a rare residential designation, with commercial buildings more commonly applying for LEED Certified status, but one that the couple decided to take on themselves.



Inside John Rowland and Sarah Broughton's LEED certified dream home of their own in Aspen's West End neighborhood. Courtesy: Rowland + Broughton

“We wanted to put our money where our mouths are with this particular project. Sustainability is in our firm’s DNA,” says Rowland.

Siting the home strategically to avoid energy-draining appliances like an air conditioning system in favor of cross ventilation, he adds, “We went to great lengths on our insulation, so not only do we have a really tight envelope, but the house stays very cool all summer long.”

Also mindful of indoor air quality, Rowland explains that in selecting interior materials, “It means really understanding every little nuance that goes into the production and that no chemicals are ever used to avoid off-gas. Start by asking where the materials are coming from ... are these supply companies green leaders in their own right? Do they practice sustainability in the harvesting of their raw materials?”





Inside John Rowland and Sarah Broughton's LEED certified dream home of their own in Aspen's West End neighborhood. Courtesy: Rowland + Broughton

Inventive elements like a gravel and sand bocce ball court in the backyard that doubles as a water filtration system for the home were matched with more traditional energy-saving tools like LED lighting and solar panels by Carbondale-based company, [Sunsense](#).

Now, nearly three years after completing a dream home of their very own, Rowland is proud to report that, "We haven't replaced a lightbulb since we moved in."

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