

Looked at Correctly, It Costs No More to Build (or Buy) a Sustainable Home

“Conventional wisdom” says that it costs more to build a solar powered, highly sustainable or net zero energy home, but that’s not really true if you look at the issue a little differently.

As you surely know, such improvements reduce the operating cost of a home. **Solar panels**, for example, can virtually eliminate your electrical bill, if your system is sized correctly. They can even provide free fuel for your cars — if they are powered by electricity.

Super insulating your home can reduce the cost of heating it, whether by natural gas or electricity (using a heat pump system). Ditto for installing triple-pane Alpen windows and doors.

If you go **all-electric**, you not only save on the natural gas or propane you consume, you can have your gas meter removed, saving on the base cost of being connected to the gas distribution network. As a commercial customer, Golden Real Estate, saves over \$600 per year from having removed our gas meter, since that’s what Xcel Energy charges before a business uses a single cubic foot of natural gas. The savings is lower for residential customers.

So, yes, it may cost more to go all-electric, but the return on investment is substantial over a pretty short period of time.

But consider the following. Whether you build or buy a home with these cost saving features, and

whether or not you pay a premium for them, you will likely be financing your home with a mortgage.

Let’s say, conservatively, that you pay an extra \$50,000 or even \$100,000 for those features, and it adds that amount to the principal of your mortgage. Your monthly savings from those solar panels or that heat pump system or those Alpen windows and extra insulation will be **far in excess of the increased monthly payment** for your mortgage.

And if you make those improvements in a home you already own, you can take out a Home Equity Line of Credit (or HELOC) to pay for them, and the monthly payments will again be less than your monthly savings.

Looked at it this way, does it make any sense at all to build a home powered by fossil fuels, that is not solar powered or that has “normal” insulation and have higher monthly cost of ownership, starting from day one? Of course not.

Here’s More Info on Incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act

John Horst of the **National Renewable Energy Lab** read last week’s column about the Inflation Reduction Act’s impact on the building sector and provided some valuable additional information.

For starters, he made me aware of the White House website, which has a listing of tax credits and grants under the IRA which pertain specifically to each state. I have posted the link for the benefits at GoldenREblog.com. It’s a two-page PDF with paragraphs about those financial incentives plus job creation, manufacturing, cleaner air, rural opportunities and “resilient communities.”

One new incentive that hasn’t gotten a lot of coverage is the \$4,000 upfront discount on the purchase of

You can apply the same reasoning to the purchase of an electric car. You could go with the conventional wisdom that electric cars are more expensive and you should wait until the price comes down, but that thinking substantially misrepresents the **cost of ownership**.

I haven’t purchased gasoline for my electric cars since 2014, during which time I have saved tens of thousands of dollars on gasoline as well as on repairs on components that don’t exist on an EV, such as transmission, engine, fuel pumps, water pumps, timing belts and so much more.

And I have never had a catalytic converter stolen — or lost any sleep after reading about the epidemic of such thefts in my city.

Forgetting for the moment that there are indeed EVs which cost no more than their gasoline-powered equivalents, even if you paid \$10,000 more for an EV than you might for a gas powered car, the cost of financing that difference is far less than what you’ll save on fuel and repairs.

If I have changed your thinking about making your home (or trans-

portation) more sustainable, here’s what you can do. First, attend this year’s Metro Denver Green Homes Tour on October 1st. You’ll be able to visit a dozen or so homes whose owners have taken steps to make their homes more energy efficient or even net zero energy. You’ll also visit a home builder who is building net zero energy homes. If you can’t visit some of these homes in person, you can view the narrated video tours which I have created for most of them.

(You can also — right now — take video tours of 16 homes that were on this tour in previous years!)

You can register for the tour — and see those videos — at www.NewEnergyColorado.com.

And if I have changed your thinking about the cost of buying or owning an electric vehicle, plan on coming to the **Electric Vehicle Roundup** (mentioned below) which occurs the same day, October 1st, as the Metro Denver Green Homes Tour. If that date doesn’t work for you, there are many other EV roundups in October around Colorado. Find those other events online at www.DriveElectricWeek.org.

used electric cars and trucks. In the past, there was no incentive for purchasing a used EV, and the \$7,500 incentive for a new EV came only as a tax credit on the following year’s tax return.

Making both incentives an “upfront discount” will make both incentives much more attractive and useful to car buyers and will accelerate the adop-

tion of electric vehicles.

John also provided a link to a list of 59 state and federal tax credits (both personal and corporate), loan programs, grant programs, rebate programs, sales tax incentives, regulatory policies, energy standards and more — each with its own link for further information. That link is also posted at www.GoldenREblog.com.

Come to Our Presentation About Options for Seniors

This coming Sunday, Sept. 18th, I’m the guest speaker, along with **Jenn Gomer of CarePatrol**, at the **Sunday Night Club West** meeting at Lakewood’s **Clement Center, 1580 Yarrow Street**. All are welcome.

Jenn and I were invited to speak about “**Aging in Place vs. 55+ Communities**.” As you may know, my wife Rita and I moved into an “active adult” community called **Avenida Lakewood**, with the help and advice of Jenn Gomer, whose business it is to provide that service for seniors. We told her what we were looking for, and she found it!

If you’d like to attend our presentation, call **Barbara Stannard** at **303-987-8200**. Come for dinner at 6:00, or just show up for our presentation, which starts at 7:00. We look forward to sharing what we know!

Price Reduced on Townhome

This great townhome at **5514 W. Canyon Trail #D** is in great shape and backs to a greenbelt. The price was just reduced to **\$395,000**. Take a narrated tour at www.MillbrookTownhome.online, then come to an open house this Saturday, Sept. 24th, 11am to 1pm, or call Jim Smith at **303-525-1851** for a private showing.



Bring Your Electric Vehicle to the Oct. 1 EV Roundup

Each year on the first Saturday of October Golden Real Estate hosts an Electric Vehicle Roundup in the parking lot of **The Net Zero Store** (our former real estate office), at **17695 S. Golden Road**. And every year 30 or more different EVs are displayed by their owners who are there to answer questions for prospective EV owners.

If you have an EV — especially one of the new ones, such as the F-150 Lightning — we want you to show it off at this event! Register at www.DriveElectricWeek.info either as an owner or attendee.

At press time 13 owners who have driven a half-million miles on electricity alone have registered for this event.



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