



Sustainable Marblehead leads Green Homes Tour

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Behind Lynn Nadeau’s Surf Street home is her “energy-free clothes dryer.” You might recognize it as a clothesline.

“I had a consulting service for a while,” Nadeau said, standing on her back porch. “I had a little red wagon, and I’d go around and consult with people about where or how a clothesline would work for them. It’s very idiosyncratic.”



George Hooper shows off his Tesla solar panel rooftop during Saturday’s Green Homes Tour sponsored by Sustainable Marblehead. *CURRENT PHOTOS / EMILY STEVENS*

buildings accounts for more than one-third of the town’s greenhouse gas emissions. With a goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, the local organization is putting an emphasis on educating residents. That led to nearly a dozen residents opening their homes Saturday to let visitors see various energy-efficient technologies in action and talk to the homeowners who installed them.

More than just a car

For visitors to George and Jane Hooper’s Pine Cliff Drive home, it was easy to see green technology at work. All George Hooper had to do was take out his phone and open an app, and one could see exactly how many kilowatts

Nadeau’s clothesline was just one small stop on Saturday’s Green Homes Tour, an event sponsored by Sustainable Marblehead and aimed at teaching participants just how easy it can be to go green. According to Sustainable Marblehead Executive Director Louise Yarmoff, heating and cooling homes and

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the Hoopers were racking up via their Tesla solar glass roof. And the solar panels were, in turn, powering two Tesla vehicles sitting in his driveway.

“We like to say we’re driving on sunshine,” Jane Hooper said.

“And I like to say it’s free, but it’s not,” George Hooper said.

One must pay for the system, which Hooper admits does not come cheap, but economics wasn’t really his incentive for putting in the Tesla rooftop.

“It was to support Tesla’s mission, which I agree with, to transition the world to sustainable energy, to accelerate the transition,” he said. “We need to move away from fossil fuels to sustainable energy, and this is the start.”

Despite the lack of southern exposure, George Hooper said during the summer months, the panels generate more electricity than they need to power not only the cars but the entire house. The additional power gets credited back through the Marblehead Municipal Light Department and can be applied to the grayer, colder months when they are forced to draw off the grid, he explained.

“He’s very cutting-edge,” Jane said of her husband. “George is an early adopter of all technology, so when we got the roof, we knew it wasn’t going to generate year-round because of the position of the house, but he wanted it anyway.”

Hooper admits he was first drawn to the Tesla vehicles because they are quick, quiet and fun to drive, but he jumped on the green bandwagon because it made a lot of sense. For anyone thinking of joining the Hooper’s bandwagon, George recommends looking into another Tesla option, leasing solar panels.



Lynn Nadeau invited her neighbors to use her “compost heap,” which she has been proudly generating since 1970.

“Because for a lot of people, it comes down to dollars, and economically the payback on this is many years,” he said. “If you lived in Florida or southern California or with a southern exposure, the payback could be six or seven years, but for me, it’s over 20.”

Incentives and rebates

Along with technology, homeowners also provided a list of possible rebates and incentives for visitors seeking greener pastures. Sustainable Marblehead Board Member Petra Langer called the programs offered through MassSave, federal tax credits and Marblehead’s own Municipal Light Department important “because I think that’s one thing holding people back is the cost. It’s an upfront investment.”

But the incentives are increasing. John Livermore, whose Russell Street home was also on the tour, said MassSave offers “a great program,” where homeowners can borrow money, interest-free, to convert their homes to renewable energy while taking seven years to pay it back.

Livermore and his wife Kelly O’Malley are in the process of going all-electric.

“We’ve got a quote for air-source heat pumps, and we’re going to get an electric induction system,” he said. “We have to stop burning things because of the climate issue.”

According to the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, a heat pump system “uses electricity to power a compressor and transfer heat using the refrigeration cycle. In winter, it transfers heat indoors; in summer, it transfers heat outdoors. Think of it as an air conditioner that can also work in reverse.”

Livermore said the big picture when it comes to green technology is to electrify all end uses, everything in the home and transportation, and decarbonize the electric grid “so we get all our electrons from renewable sources.”

And it helps to be advanced

Like Hooper, Nadeau said she’s always been ahead of her time. She got an induction stove 20 years ago and has never looked back.

“People are really reluctant to get their induction stoves ... because everyone is a stick in the mud; they stay with what they know,” she said.

Nadeau said the stove is simple and fast.

“If my kids call me and they’re in the car at the General Edward’s bridge (in Lynn), I might have a big pot of water sitting on the stove, and I turn it on, and by the time they get here, the pasta is ready,” she said.

She called the stove better than gas and a good way to foil the gas company, “and we’ve got to foil them in whatever way we can.”



That said, Nadeau admits she hasn’t totally given up on gas. When it comes to heating her 115-year-old home, she has a dual system that includes an air-source heat pump for the second floor but a gas furnace for the first floor. She also has a mini-split, which is a smaller-style heat pump, to warm the kitchen in cold weather, a tankless hot water heater and a “very fine compost heap that I’ve had since 1970.”

“When the furnace broke three years ago, I was just nervous relying on just the heat pump because it was kind of new, so I do, in the interest of honesty, have a gas furnace as well,” she said.

That tankless hot water heater is also gas-fired.

“My problem was I wanted it not gas-fired, but it would have entailed changing the electricity in the whole house, which I couldn’t do, so it is gas-fired,” she said.

And in the end, Nadeau said she’s OK with that because when it comes to going green, you have to do what you can.

“What is it they say, perfection is the enemy of the good?,” she asked. “One tries to do what one can do.”



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