

# Sustainable Home Building and Design

Advice from the Pros



Think about solar energy. Visit [www.groSolar.com](http://www.groSolar.com) for more information.

It's a sunny Wednesday afternoon and Naturally New England is sitting in the home of Alan and Donna Frankel waiting for Alan to arrive home. Alan Frankel is taking public transportation because it's more eco-friendly than driving a car in and out of Boston each day. Working with architect Olaf Vollertsen of Vollertsen Architecture and energy consultant Marc Rosenbaum, the Frankels have recently redone their home in Newton, Massachusetts "green" and are sharing their experiences with Naturally New England.

"I think what's important when thinking about being environmentally friendly," says Alan Frankel, "is to understand that you try and balance sustainable, energy efficiency, re-usable, and health all within your budgets constraints". The Frankels tried to re-purpose as much of

their existing home features (moldings, wood, etc.) as possible while incorporating new eco-responsible items like LED lighting, low VOC paint, EnergyStar appliances, and a small single point heating system that does not require ducts or pipes.

The result in their small space is a place that is not only eco-friendly but restored to its original New England charm. But doing a home over in such a "green" way can also be challenging. "Sometimes they would want something and we would really need to do quite a bit of research on where to get it," says Vollertsen. "There's not a one-stop shop for everything 'green' when you are building a home. It took us all some time to find everything we wanted and then sometimes we needed to wait for it to arrive."

But as New England builders and manufacturers adopt more sustainable practices and carry more green products, the landscape is starting to change. A few companies are leading the way when it comes to helping homeowners create the eco-friendly home of their dreams. GerrityStone in Woburn, MA. is just one of the companies who worked with the Frankels on their kitchen re-design. They are leading the way when it comes to taking the environment into account by selling countertop products eco-minded consumers want.

"It has taken some time for product manufacturers to be able to design and deliver eco-friendly countertop options at a competitive price," states Tracy Streckenbach, CEO of GerrityStone. "We now have countertop options at a variety of price-points. Using eco-friendly products is no longer reserved only for the high-end market, but it's an option available for consideration by everyone."

GerrityStone now carries a variety of products for homeowners looking to be more eco-responsible or even to have their homes LEED Certified; Eco (by Cosentino), Ice Stone and the Zodiac Terra Collection (by DuPont). Each of them are unique and beautiful. IceStone for example, is made from 100% recycled glass and cement and is manufactured in a Brooklyn Navy Yard. Zodiac's Terra Collection contains at least half pre-consumer recycled glass, and Eco is almost all post industrial and post consumer material. "We selected Eco," says Frankel, "because it was not only beautiful but within our budget." The Frankels are proof that doing work on home in an eco-friendly way doesn't mean you have to break the bank.

"I think people think that going 'green' means everything will cost more but it doesn't have to," says Sarah Beatty, CEO of Green Depot in Stoneham, MA. Green Depot carries many flooring, cleaning, paint, and building products for homeowners. "At Green Depot, we believe 'becoming eco-friendly' is really about saving by being practical and smart. Invest your cash resources where they will deliver the highest benefit return to your home and your life. When thinking about home projects make sure to create an environment that reflects who you are—one that is efficient, healthy and comforting for you and your family."

At groSolar in Vermont, CEO Jeff Wolfe is all too aware that the perception of "green" in the minds of homeowners and home builders is expensive. "People think that being more eco-friendly means it's more expensive, especially when it comes to

Alan and Donna Frankel's kitchen in Newton, MA. uses gorgeous materials while still maintaining their budget. Countertop: Eco by Cosentino from GerrityStone. Cabinets: Terrene. (Photo: Marcus Eddings, MCE Photography)



*"People think that being more eco-friendly means it's more expensive, especially when it comes to something like solar energy, but the incentive programs now are very good for people who want to use solar. Many states are now making solar options as cost effective as 'dirty power sources' plus it saves on energy costs and the planet". Jeff Wolfe CEO of groSolar.*



## GerrityStone's Tracy Streckenbach's Tips for an Eco-Friendly Home

**Take Baby Steps:** Each of us can take small steps that will eventually lead to larger ones. Just get started and dive in. Lighting is an easy place to start. When upgrading an existing space consider what you'd like to do with the waste. Are there components that can be donated to Habitat for Humanity? Are there pieces of granite or marble that are being removed that can be repurposed for a table top or shelf?

**Share, Don't Dump:** As Americans, I think we are all becoming more aware of things that end up in landfills that others could utilize. Especially in the face of the Haiti disaster, we can all be more conscious of sharing rather than dumping.

**Do Business with Companies that Practice "Green":** Companies you do business with shouldn't just sell green products but also adhere to as many eco-friendly practices as possible. At GerrityStone, we have taken small steps each quarter to improve our "green" practices. I suspect we'll never be completely satisfied with our results and we'll just keep improving as we learn and develop new ways to support green building and evaluating our businesses not only on profitability but on our ability to positively impact the community around us.

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Tracy Streckenbach  
CEO of GerrityStone

something like solar energy," states Wolfe, "but the incentive programs now are very good for people who want to use solar. Many states are now making solar options as cost effective as 'dirty power sources' plus it saves on energy costs and the planet". Solar energy has often been one of the most misunderstood pieces of the "green" movement but it has been around for years.

Says Wolfe, "People can comprehend using eco-friendly flooring or paint but when it comes to solar I think they sometimes become overwhelmed. Solar is like everything else. At groSolar we walk people through the entire process and take the time to answer all their questions. We want people to know exactly what they are purchasing. I think when they become more educated they realize that this type of energy is not only smart, at some point it will become necessary. Electric power is the biggest source of CO2 emissions, half generated by coal and much of the rest by fossil fuels. Solar is making a huge difference. This country can make an enormous impact by having more energy security, not relying on other countries for energy and fuel resources, and not polluting the planet".

Companies like groSolar are excited about educating consumers and having more "green" experts working for them. GerrityStone has employees who are well versed in eco-friendly options and can respond to the growing consumer demand for knowledge.



Green Depot in Stoneham, MA. offers many products to homeowners, home builders, and contractors. (Photo: Marcus Eddings, MCE Photography)

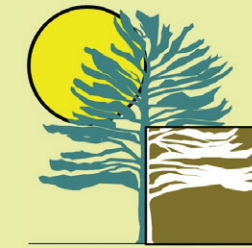
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# Cattell Consulting

*Sustainable Home Remodeling & Renovation*



Jean Bartholomew

cattellconsulting@gmail.com

132 Rand Terrace, Newton, MA 02466

Phone: 857-636-2504

Don't be afraid to ask questions.  
Make sure to tap into the advice  
from professionals.



“As we all become more aware of our impact on the world around us, we become more interested in how we can lessen that impact”, adds Streckenbach. “Our clients rely on us to counsel them in our area of expertise (countertops, fireplace surrounds, shower walls, etc.). We are not simply interested in ‘selling’ our clients green products. What we want to do is to understand our clients’ goals, their lifestyle, what is important in each specific design and installation that we are involved with. For some projects, green materials will be an important element, and in those cases, we ensure our customers know all the options and the risks and benefits associated with each and every option”.

Beatty agrees, “The goal at Green Depot is not about ‘here you need all these green products’; it’s about what is the right combination of things for each individual. What solutions do you need to make your life better? We’re here to make those solutions accessible and affordable; when we do that, everybody wins.”

Wolfe believes that New Englanders can lead the way when it comes to adopting an eco-friendly lifestyle. “I think New Englanders have historically had an appreciation for the environment. The more you live in a place, the more awareness you have of what’s around you and the more appreciation you have for your surroundings. I think people are more than ready to create or

## Green Depot's Sarah Beatty's Practical Suggestions for Homeowners Getting Started

**Weatherization:** If your goal is to ensure your home is energy efficient for the winter, ensure all of the cracks and holes in your home are sealed using non toxic caulks, sealants and formaldehyde free insulation.

**Air Quality & Respiratory Health:** If your interest is to ensure that air quality indoors is healthy during the winter and spring months, de-clutter your home, switch to non toxic cleaners, and invest in air purifiers for heavily trafficked rooms. If you have carpets and pets, double up your vacuuming routine to avoid build up of dust and dander. If you do paint, use a Zero-VOC paint formula, Like Ivy Coatings (available at Green Depot), to ensure there is no off-gassing of unhealthy toxins indoors.

**Energy & Water Conservation:** If you want to reduce your water and electricity bills, invest in water filters for showers and faucets, and set up a rain barrel to catch water for gardening/landscape, install EnergyStar appliances and light bulbs, energy conserving power strips, and timed thermostats throughout your home. Plus, buy reusable water bottles, drink from your filtered tap, and forgo buying plastic bottled water.

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*Sarah Beatty  
CEO of Green Depot*



continue to create sustainable living spaces, live a healthier life, and help the planet.”

At the end of the day, the goal for homeowners is to simply try to figure out where “green” fits into their lives. Experts at companies like GerrityStone, Green Depot, and groSolar can help educate you and answer the questions you may have. Whether you simply select an eco-friendly paint or take-on an entire home remodel, remember that all throughout New England there are now companies who can help you make a better and healthier choice. **NNE**

*Tracy Streckenbach is the CEO of GerrityStone. To learn more about their product offerings visit [www.gerritystone.com](http://www.gerritystone.com).*

*To find a Green Depot near you or to hear more from their CEO Sarah Beatty go to [www.greendepot.com](http://www.greendepot.com).*

*CEO Jeff Wolfe has educational tools and detailed information on solar energy at groSolar’s website at [www.groSolar.com](http://www.groSolar.com).*

## groSolar’s Jeff Wolfe’s Advice on Solar Energy

**Don’t be Overwhelmed:** Solar manufacturers and distributors should take the time and answer your questions. At groSolar we take the time to walk each customer through the process and respond to each and every question they may have. It’s really not as overwhelming as it seems.

**It’s Affordable:** Many people believe that solar is extremely expensive. That could not be further from the truth. There are excellent incentive programs in New England for people who want to implement solar in their homes. Good solar companies will work out a payment plan that will work for you.

**Embrace Change:** Often times, people don’t think that New England is a great place for solar energy. That could not be further from the truth. We have the right weather and climate to make solar work throughout New England. The difference it can make on the environment and the planet is tremendous.

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## Advancing your Vision: LEED Gold



When doing a remodel think about incorporating “green” elements. Even one small thing can make a big difference.



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