

# New England HOME

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## OASIS of Calm

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# Discreetly Green

Energy saving advances are embraced in classic style, inside and out.

*Text by GAIL RAVGIALA | Photography by MICHAEL J. LEE | Produced by KARIN LIDBECK BRENT*



Typical of the Greek Revival style, the house has a front-facing gable, squared columns, second-story pilaster details, and large double-hung windows. There are no signs of net-zero elements; even the array of solar panels on the south-facing roof is not visible from the street.



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** The focal point of the living room is the walnut boxlike shelves and console by Leslie Fine Interiors designed to reflect midcentury modern sensibilities; a handsome wet bar, also in walnut, blends form and function. A built-in nook in the rear entry hall is lined in walnut paneling and inset with a bench and mirror with curved corners in the midcentury style. In the front entry, the German-made Schüco turn-and-tilt triple-pane windows reach almost to the floor.

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raditional design meets net-zero technology in a new house on a quiet suburban street west of Boston. But while passersby can admire the classic nineteenth-century Greek Revival-style architecture, and visitors can take in the mid-twentieth-century-modern aesthetic of the interior, the twenty-first-century building techniques and products that make the structure a model of energy efficiency are hidden from view.







**ABOVE:** Walnut accents continue in the kitchen against a backdrop of sleek white cabinetry. Two-thirds of the island is workspace, centered around a seventy-two-inch-long sink with two gooseneck faucets. **LEFT:** There is no formal dining area, so meals are taken at the island, which can seat six on comfortable dining chairs converted to counter-height stools. A chandelier by John Pomp through Studio 534 defines the dining space.



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—Interior designer Leslie Fine

“Although this house is most advanced in terms of green building, we used architectural details that people would recognize,” says architect J.B. Clancy of ART Architects. Set in a neighborhood of 1930s Tudor and Colonial Revival houses, the new structure is quietly compatible in style and scale.

The house gets to net-zero—that is, its annual energy consumption is less than or equal to the amount of energy it generates—without fanfare. There are no bells and whistles attached to the energy-saving elements, just the unseen protection of the thermal blanket that envelops the frame like a snug down parka. Continuous super insulation mitigates “thermal bridging,” which occurs in conventional buildings when



One of the guest rooms doubles as an office and sitting room. A desk the clients brought from their previous residence supports the midcentury theme. On the opposite wall, a Murphy bed accommodates overnight guests.

a lack of insulation at corners, joints, windows, and doors allows heat to escape. “We create an environment where no air comes in and out,” says Mathew Roth of Hawthorn Builders. To ensure there

is adequate ventilation, an energy recovery system exchanges fresh air for stale while extracting energy in the process.

Heating and cooling are provided by a Mitsubishi



**CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:** Everything but the shoes is hidden behind custom walnut doors in the primary suite's walk-in closet. "The powder room is like a little jewel box," says designer Leslie Fine, who framed the playful pattern from Lunada Bay Tile with walnut. A tray ceiling in the primary bedroom hides the hardware for the floor-to-ceiling motorized curtains.



air-source pump powered with electricity generated by the solar panels on the roof, which is angled for optimal southern exposure. In fact, the entire house is sited so that living spaces face south for passive solar advantage.

Inside, the design reflects the homeowners' commitment to efficiency—energy and otherwise. The empty-nest couple primarily occupies the first-floor living room, kitchen, and primary suite, reserving the four second-floor bedrooms for guests. "With

limited space, function is key," says interior designer Leslie Fine. "Every room has a use, which mimics the idea of net-zero."

Though the marketplace is moving toward green building, it is not mainstream, says Roth. "There are costs involved in building a super-insulated house,



The U-shaped footprint of the house creates a south-facing courtyard accessible from all the primary first-floor spaces. Furnishings include whimsical Adirondack-style chairs, casual sofas, and a teak dining table and chairs, all from JANUS et Cie.

but they are reduced in savings over time,” he says. “We have an opportunity to educate people why these practices are good for the environment and for the people living in the house.”

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For details, see Resources.

**ARCHITECTURE:** ART Architects  
**INTERIOR DESIGN:** Leslie Fine Interiors  
**BUILDER:** Hawthorn Builders  
**LANDSCAPE DESIGN:** Offshoots