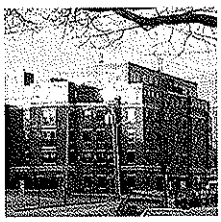
SMART ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Living "Green" at Walker Terrace

By Barbara Winterson



Stepping from the bitter cold sweeping off Congress Street into the lobby, I could tell this was a very different kind of apartment building. There is something about a well insulated building that gives an immediate sense of security. Not only was it toasty warm, but the sounds of the city traffic were muffled beyond recognition.

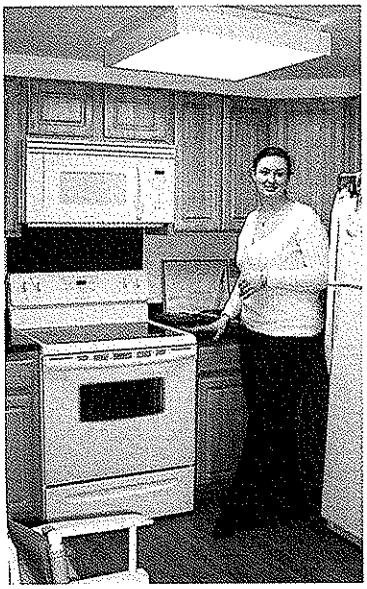
Amy Cullen had invited me to check out Walker Terrace, the first project in Maine under the Maine State Housing Authority's Green Building Standards. In addition to super-high insulation the building's appliances, lighting and systems are Energy Star. The carpeting is low emission and the paint, adhesives and sealants are low in volatile organic compounds. Water conservation is achieved with low-flow faucets and showerheads. Recycling bins are conveniently located on each floor.

While it is possible to build green anywhere, an important contribution to energy conservation is how the building reduces energy used in transportation. Walker Terrace is located on multiple bus lines, shopping and many downtown amenities are within walking distance. Each apartment only allows for one parking space and there is bike storage right off the lobby for the storage - enough for 40 bicycles!

But there is another way that these apartments are "green." Amy, who works for Maine Workforce Housing, told me that half of the apartments are designated as "affordable." When people can't live near where they work because of the high cost of housing, in Maine they usually move to rural areas where prices are typically lower. This pattern contributes to sprawl, loss of farmland, traffic congestion, and greenhouse gases.

As part of my tour, Joan, a retired writing instructor, was gracious enough to allow me to tour her two bedroom apartment. Her place was bright, warm, spacious and quiet (even though it overlooked Congress St.). Joan did not have a car, but found she didn't need one. Rite Aid was across the street, a small grocery market was a few blocks away and made a special point to tell me that "the Portland Museum of Art was a 12 minute walk away!" If she needed to go further, either bus or taxi could get her there.

For more information about Walker terrace call Amy Cullen, 207.871.1661, or email her at amycullen@maine.rr.com



Amy Cullen demonstrates Energy Star appliances at Walker Terrace from Congress Street.

Just What Are Green Tags?

Renewable energy certificates (often called "green tags", "tradable renewable credits", "TRCs" or "RECs") represent the environmental attributes of power generated from renewable electric plants. These voluntary, separate payments represent a simple way to replace or offset the environmental impacts of "dirty" generation with the environmental benefits of clean renewable energy.

Renewable energy generators and green power marketers offer these certificates separately from electricity service. That is, you do not switch from your electricity supplier in order to purchase green power through certificates. Buying renewable energy certificates is a separate purchase, distinct from your electricity bill. This purchase has the effect of enabling renewable energy generators to produce more renewable energy.

Buying renewable energy certificates is another way to pay for green electricity without being locked into a supply contract. When you purchase renewable energy certificates, you do not change the source of your electricity - you continue to receive the same electricity from the source(s) that currently supply you. Yet, by purchasing renewable energy certificates at the same time, you are effectively paying a green premium to put more green electricity into an electrical grid in the United States.

There are several differences between green electricity products that are called "green supply" and those based on "green certificates". Payment arrangements, contracting and terms of supply are key differences. Yet these two types of products are fundamentally similar in their environmental benefit. Both "green supply" and "certificates" result in more renewable energy being generated and sold.

Certification

Green-e is a voluntary certification program for renewable energy products. Green-e certification helps ensure that green power delivers the environmental benefits it promises.

Anyone in Maine—whether you have an electricity account or not -- can purchase renewable energy certificates at any time. Many green certificate products are available on the connection's Green Power Menu. Customers who want to select exactly which facilities produce their green power can work with a broker to purchase certificates directly from the generators they prefer. Please contact us for more information on any of these options.

How Do Certificates Work?

1. Green electricity generators build new renewable energy facilities.
2. They sell their electricity at the market price and begin delivering electricity to the grid in their area.
3. They also sell a certificate for every block of electricity they deliver.
4. The extra revenue from the sale of these certificates allows these green generators to stay in business, covering their higher capital costs.
5. Each kilowatt-hour that a green generator delivers displaces a kilowatt-hour from other generators, many of which burn fossil fuel.
6. Because they reduce the use of fossil fuel to generate electricity, renewable energy certificates lead to cleaner air, a healthier environment and greater energy independence for our country.

Kennebunk Becomes Seventh Maine Cool Community

On February 27 Kennebunk joined five other Maine towns when its selectmen signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, committing Kennebunk to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to seven percent below the town's 1990 level by 2012. The signing was the culmination of three years of the Chapter's Building Environmental Communities programs and the efforts of a citizens group, the Sustainable Energy Alliance.

College of the Atlantic Commits to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Last October, College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor became the first higher education institution in the nation to commit to a "net-zero" campus for greenhouse gas emissions.

Believing the specific environmental initiatives are necessary to protect the atmosphere, the college has pledged to avoid, reduce, or offset all contributions to global warming that are associated with any of the school's activities, including travel to and from campus by students and faculty.

The college, which offers a single degree in human ecology, signed a multi-year agreement in 2004 to offset 100 percent of the emissions generated from its electrical use. In 2005, they had another environmental first—a graduation and reception for over 800 people that generated only five pounds of trash.