



Energy Free: Homes for a Small Planet

Ann V. Edminster

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Energy Free is designed to equip building professionals and homeowners alike with a toolkit for creating homes that use no more energy than they produce—this means homes that are free from the vagaries of energy-price fluctuations and that help to free society of the high political and environmental costs of fossil fuels.

Individuals and institutions have been working toward "zero-energy" homes for decades. This volume is the first record of those collective efforts, distilling their experience into a practical and comprehensive how-to guide. The author includes resource information and step-by-step guidance on how to make decisions that will yield an energy-free residential project, whether a single-family home or multifamily building, new or existing, in an urban or a rural setting. The unique needs and opportunities of each context are addressed.

The principal topics include:

- Project boundaries (why you have to consider not only your home's behavior, but also your own)
- Prioritizing strategies (e.g., insulation vs. photovoltaics)
- Economics (including payback periods and incentives)
- How to minimize a building's energy needs
- How to minimize your energy needs
- How to power the energy needs that remain
- The critical role of integrated project planning

Energy Free offers a wide array of resource information, including detailed window and insulation comparisons; assessments of the relative contribution of different building elements; and overall performance. It draws on research and empirical data from myriad sources, including the Department of Energy's Building America program; Sacramento Municipal Utility District's House of the Future; Passiv Haus Institute in Europe and the Passive House Institute of the U.S.; Florida Solar Energy Center; Living Building Challenge; Affordable Comfort, Inc.'s, Thousand Home Challenge; and many pioneering individual home projects across North America.

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