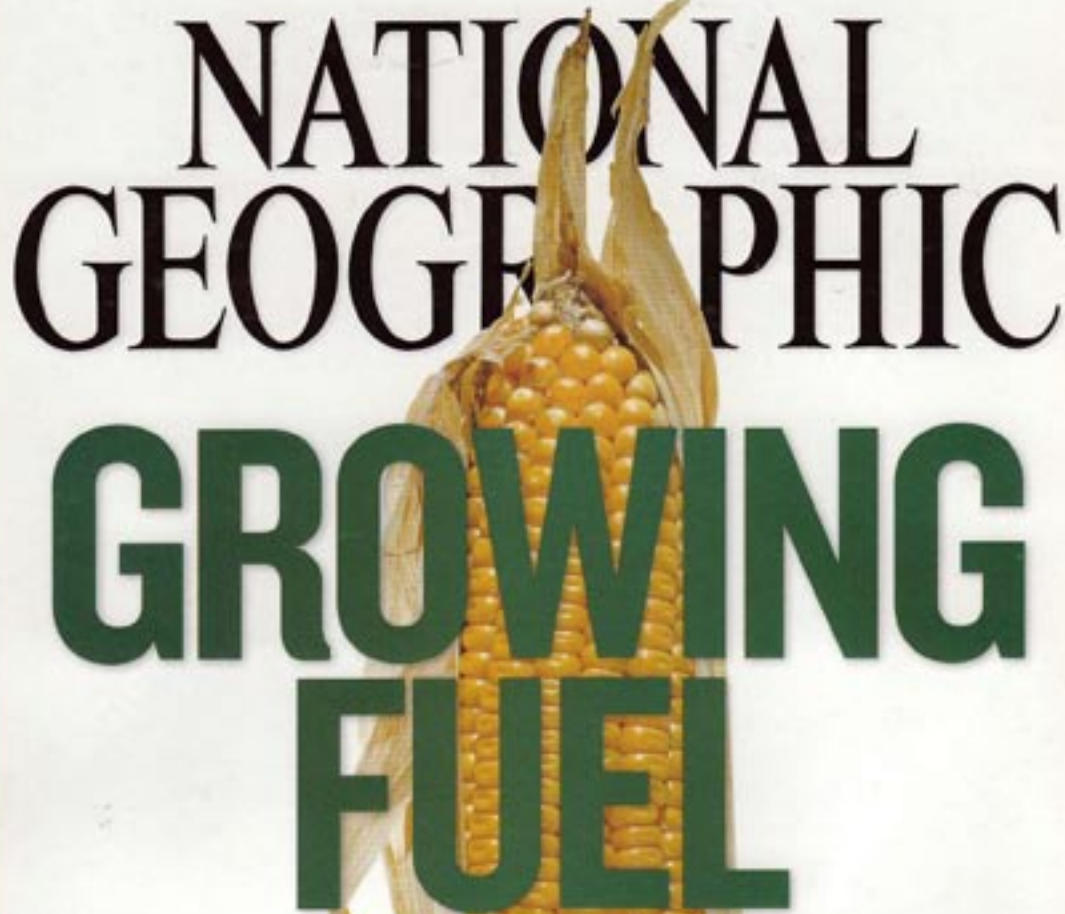


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# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

# GROWING FUEL

**The Wrong Way, The Right Way**

The Carbon Crisis 32  
Sky-High View of Latin America 60  
Animals, Humans Trade Disease 78  
Space Age Turns Fifty 106 Malacca Pirates 126

POSTER: CHANGING CLIMATE

The Ameriprise Financial

#1  
IN  
SERIES

# LifeDreams



**A Green Groove**

By dreaming big and planning smart, one Chicago couple has turned their personal passions into a rewarding life that will continue to give back for years to come.

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## Dream On

► Joining the mainstream never really interested Frank and Lisa Mauceri. Both proud dreamers even before they met at a Los Lobos concert back in college 20 years ago, the Mauceris use outside-the-box thinking as a creative technique to nurture their eco-friendly life. By merging their record company ambitions and their love of the environment they have created an environmentally inspiring live/work space they hope will ignite the imaginations of their Chicago community and colleagues in the recording industry. Their newly renovated building, a former old corner store and bar located in Chicago's artistic Bucktown neighborhood, is the United States' first and only residence that is LEED certified—a green-building rating system designed by the U.S. Green Building Council—generating its own electricity through the use of solar panels and wind turbines, and using geothermal heating and cooling.

Although the couple was on a traditional corporate track—Frank worked as an attorney and Lisa worked in finance—they dreamed of ditching the 60-hour work weeks that were feeling increasingly pointless. As devoted rock-and-rollers, they wanted to dive headfirst into their musical passions. After stints in Cleveland and Reno, the pair decided to reinvent their life in Chicago. “Chicago stood out to us,” says Frank. “The Windy City has one of the strongest green initiatives in the country and is striving to be the greenest metropolitan area in America.”

With the help of a green-savvy architect, they created a building plan that includes two wind turbines, 30 solar electric panels, geothermal heating and cooling, and a 1,900-square-foot green roof that serves as the home's yard. “The wind turbines in combination with the solar panels should create at least 40 percent of all the electricity we need. Under ideal conditions it will produce 100 percent,” says Frank. And there's even a chance that the Mauceris' system might produce more energy than is needed for their home, in which case the excess electricity is distributed back to the city's energy grid and they receive a credit on their electric bill.

As with any construction project, there were stumbling blocks. Despite Chicago's green reputation, the city's residential height restrictions prohibited building the wind turbines. But by working with the city, the couple helped Chicago create new ordinances which now exempt wind turbines from the height restrictions.

“Our neighbors are really fascinated by what's happening on the roof,” says Lisa. “We had to get the okay from them to do the wind turbines, and they were like, ‘Yeah, go for it.’ They had no problems at all.” One of the couple's favorite design features is the use of crushed record bits in the flooring material, which they helped to create. Frank smashed the records with a hammer and then Lisa ground the bits with a blender. “It's a really personal way to recycle and it really screams ‘us,’” says Lisa.

“I felt, and still feel, that the more people I tell about this way of living, the bigger positive impact I'll have, and the less negative impact we will all have on the environment,” adds Frank.

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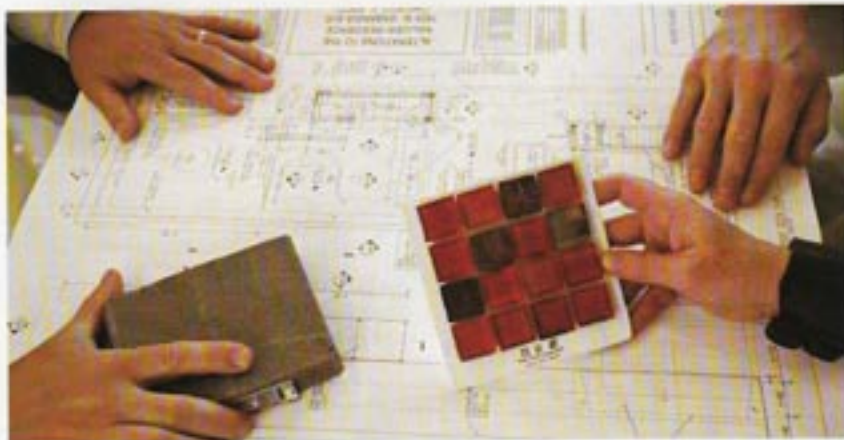
► The 5,600-square-foot structure offers plenty of room for their record company, Smog Veil Records. Frustrated by the amount of waste in the music business, the Mauceris are running Smog Veil under strict green guidelines. One first step is starting to release music in MP3 format instead of as CDs.

"We're eliminating the use of jewel cases and using cardboard packaging instead, replacing paper press kits with PDFs, offering downloadable digital booklets from our website instead of CD inserts, and taking the message of greening the music industry to others in the hopes that they will implement those practices within their business," says Frank. In addition to these moves, the Mauceris say they practice the everyday acts that anyone can do: being careful about the

amount of energy they use in the office, recycling paper, and composting. "We'd also like to replace our inefficient delivery truck with a waste-vegetable-oil, biodiesel, or electric model," says Lisa.

Measuring their efforts is an important part of the Mauceris' plan. "It's important for us to be able to track what our efforts do," he says. "We're taking special care to measure how much paper we've used in the past in our business and how much we'll be using once our green agenda is fully implemented.

"In the music industry, the one thing that's going to make a difference is showing that the implementation of green practices within your business reduces your overhead and increases your net profits."



### Track Progress

► Like so many people who crave an epic life they can be proud of, the Mauceris kept their eye on the future and harnessed their dreams. "Now I feel like I can go to sleep at night under this very green roof and feel good about myself, my house, and the way we choose to live," says Lisa. "If I can make a difference, even if it's a very small personal difference, I'm glad to do it. It's our green dream come true."

When asked if she and Frank view themselves as dreamers, Lisa responds with an affirmative yes: "Absolutely. It's always important to be optimistic about life and what you're doing so you're not stuck in a bubble. I think you see limitless possibilities when you're dreaming, and then it gives you excitement and the vision to keep going forward."



Go online to see the finished home and follow the couple's story at [nationalgeographic.com/LifeDreams](http://nationalgeographic.com/LifeDreams)

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