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Aug 8, 2007 11:41 pm US/Central

Wicker Park Building A Landmark In Green Design

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by Steve Baskerville

CHICAGO (CBS) — Wicker Park has a new landmark and it's not a new restaurant, trendy bar or fashion boutique.

As CBS 2's Steve Baskerville reports, there's an old storefront on a corner lot that's been transformed into a truly remarkable example of residential green design. It's so unique, it's the only one of its kind in Chicago, and possibly the country. CBS 2 got a tour during and after construction.

The former 1880s tavern was completely gutted for Frank Mauceri's Smog Veil record company. He and his wife, Lisa, created a mixed-use space showcasing innovative eco-friendly designs, like floors made from recycled glass and old vinyl records.

"We crushed those records using some sledge hammers and a couple of blenders," Mauceri said.

They recycled the old floor joists and trusses and sprayed soy-based foam insulation, but the coolest stuff is on the roof.

"We have solar panels and wind turbines," said project manager Greg Gibson of Wilkinson Blender.

Solar panels atop houses have been around for years, but wind turbines?

"Yes, it's definitely the first residential installation in Chicago," Gibson said.

The silent wind turbines, made in Chicago by the Aerotecture Company, will generate power with as little as a 5-mile-per-hour wind.

And because of this particular project, the city zoning code was permanently changed to allow wind turbines on Chicago residences.

"I think everyone should strongly consider it," said Richard Rodriguez, executive director of the Chicago Dept. of Construction and Permits. "The technology is new and economically it may not make sense, but just like any new technology the prices will come down."

Mauceri estimates the 10 megawatts of electricity he will generate annually will pay him back in seven and a half years.


Another big payback is down in the basement. There, hidden by a thick layer of cement, are the guts of the home's heating and cooling system: 15 60-foot deep geothermal wells.

"We did some research and found out that it was an incredibly very simply and efficient way to heat and cool the building," Mauceri said.

The wells supply a constant 55 degree source of air for the heating and cooling

Video

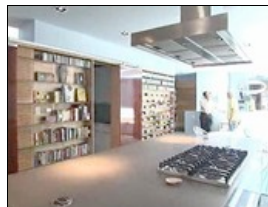
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"These technologies certainly will become cheaper over time and I would think within the next 10 years the solar panel on a house will be just as common as a DVD player," Mauceri said.



The structure was built in the 1880s as a tavern, and the owners repurposed many of the original floor joists and trusses. CBS



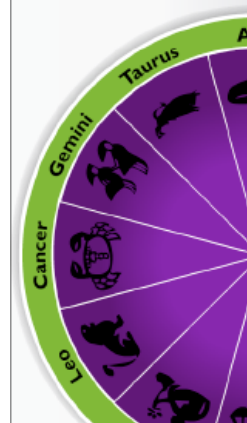
The converted building has both solar panels and wind turbines on its roof. CBS

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systems. In winter, that means the furnace doesn't have to stay on nearly as long to heat the air, and in summer, there's virtually no need for an air conditioner.

Households can save 50 percent of their heating and cooling costs, but the sizable investment is most practical for new construction.

From the high tech systems in the basement to the low tech rooftop garden, Mauceri believes these features could soon become commonplace.

"These technologies certainly will become cheaper over time and I would think within the next 10 years the solar panel on a house will be just as common as a DVD player," he said.

The city's Department of Construction and Permits says it's trying to make the green permitting process as customer-friendly as possible.
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