

# Reducing One's "Carbon Footprint" Can Make Good Financial Sense

Thanks to the persistence and hard work of Al Gore, Americans of all political persuasions are coming to recognize that global warming is a real threat which we must begin to address in a coherent and organized way. At the same time, the small steps taken by individual citizens can, collectively, play an important role in literally saving the world as we know it.

Global warming, as you know, is caused by the accumulation of carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub> gases that are emitted by all forms of energy consumption, from burning coal-fired plants to generate electricity to driving our cars.

Activists in this movement to reduce global warming focus on how to reduce our individual and collective output of this gas, sometimes ex-

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## REAL ESTATE TODAY



By **JIM SMITH,**  
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pressed as "reducing our carbon footprint." We can do that by reducing our VMT (vehicle miles traveled) and we can do that by reducing the amount of natural gas and electricity we purchase for our homes and businesses.

Manufacturing consumes a lot of energy, so recycling — or, better, reusing — materials can contribute to reducing industry's carbon output. At our house, we not only recycle paper, cardboard, plastic, glass,

aluminum and tin, we also collect polystyrene (aka "Styrofoam") and take it to a polystyrene factory near the Mousetrap (I-25 & I-70) where it is gladly accepted. We take the polystyrene "peanuts" that are used for packing and either re-use them ourselves or take them in bags to the UPS Store where they gladly accept them for re-use.

Recently, Rita and I purchased an investment property with a substantial south-facing roof, and we hired

Golden Solar (303-960-7007) to install the maximum possible number of photovoltaic panels on it, after leaving room for Novan Solar (303-279-8108) to install two solar thermal panels for providing hot water. We'll still be using gas to heat the house in winter, but we'll probably make more money selling excess electricity to Xcel than we'll spend on gas for heating. That qualifies it as a "Zero Energy Home."

Our return on investment (ROI) on the photovoltaic installation is shorter than a decade, but the home's value also increased by much more than the \$17,000 net cost after our \$2,000 federal tax credit and our \$37,000 rebate from Xcel Energy.

We plan to install a similar photovoltaic system on the roof of our new real estate office on South Golden Road, and expect it to make that facility a net energy producer as well. After it's up and running, we'll be hosting free seminars on photovoltaic and other solar solutions at that office, which will be a useful demo site. Look for announcement of these seminars in this column.

## This Week's Featured New Listing:

### Talk About Affordability! \$129K Buys 2-BR Condo

This 2-bedroom, 2-bath condo is on the top floor of this 3-story building at 13097 W. Cedar Drive backing to open space. In fact the unit itself is on the back side of this building, so its balcony and master bedroom both look out over that open space. Trailheads for the Green Mountain open space are also close by. Built in 1984, the building has been well maintained and the unit nicely updated. You'll enjoy the gas fireplace, the berber carpeting and ceramic tile kitchen floor. All kitchen appliances are included, and the washer/dryer are negotiable. Just listed this Monday, I suggest you call for a showing today before someone else buys it!



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