

Living on Conservation Street

Living Earth-friendly a mission statement for the residents of Bend's Shasta Place neighborhood for many years

By Kate Ramsayer / *The Bulletin*

Published: August 16, 2010 4:00AM PST

On a cliff above Northwest Shasta Place, overlooking the Deschutes River, Tom Elliott and Barbara Scott are planning to build a super-efficient green home. Their 3,000-square-foot home is designed to use only water collected on-site, get all its power from solar panels and wind turbines, and be built only with environmentally friendly materials.

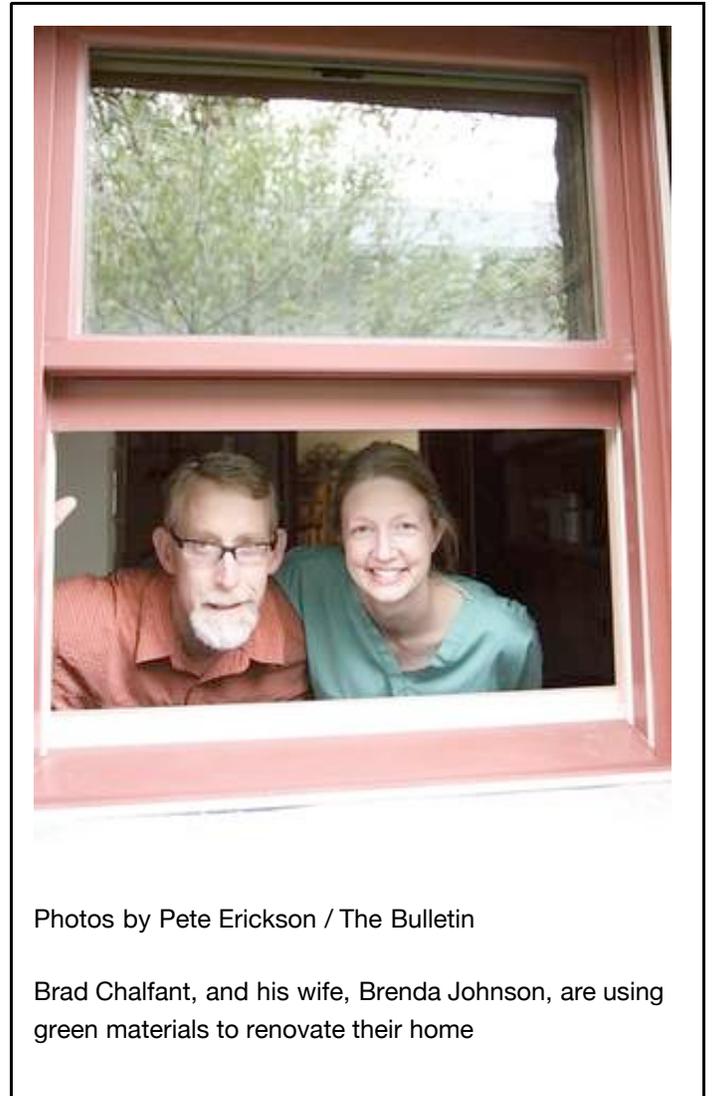
But living green is not a new thing on Shasta Place.

The street just south of downtown Bend has drawn residents involved in the local conservation community and those who like to live simply in the bungalows on small lots originally built for millworkers.

While several homeowners said they are intrigued by and supportive of what Elliott and Scott are planning for their double lot at the top of the street, many have found different ways to shrink their environmental footprint for years.

"It's an interesting little neighborhood, that's for sure," said resident Brad Chalfant, executive director of the Deschutes Land Trust, which works to preserve natural areas in Central Oregon. "Over time, it's kind of attracted an eclectic group of folks that value those sort of old-style neighborhoods."

Chalfant remembers going to a presentation before NorthWest Crossing was developed, where the speaker expounded on planned communities, small lots and walkable neighborhoods.



Photos by Pete Erickson / *The Bulletin*

Brad Chalfant, and his wife, Brenda Johnson, are using green materials to renovate their home

planned communities, small lots and walkable neighborhoods.

"I remember walking back home and thinking, gee, that's my neighborhood, but it's kind of an older, funkier version," he said.

Chalfant is able to walk or ride his bike to work, but what drew him and his wife, Brenda Johnson, to the neighborhood is the chance to live simply, he said. That way, he can do work that he finds meaningful at the Deschutes Land Trust.

"It's not just about saving the Earth, it's about a simpler lifestyle and having the options to do things you want to do," Chalfant said.

The couple are doing some renovation work, he said, and they are trying to use the greenest materials and upgrade to efficient appliances. But sometimes, the green options are just too expensive.

"You can spend an obscene amount of money doing that sort of thing, and that's great if you're trying to make a statement," he said. "But that's not what we're trying to do."

Simplicity is the goal of his neighbors as well.

Maureen Sweeney and Peter Geiser, who helped found the Environmental Center in Bend, go by the motto, "Living simply so others may live," Sweeney said.

They have a small, 1,100-square-foot home, and Sweeney started an organic vegetable garden as soon as she moved into the house in 1976. The family also heats water with solar panels, and got rid of a polluting, wood-burning furnace years ago.

Across the street, Bonnie Lamb, who works for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, planted a vegetable garden in her front yard this year.

"I actually ripped out my front lawn because I just hated the idea of spending the water and energy on grass," she said.

Now, she has raised beds with tomatoes, potatoes, peas, greens and raspberries, and waters it with rainwater collected in an old garbage can.

"This is the first year, but I've been eating a lot of salads and peas," she said.



Photos by Pete Erickson / The Bulletin



Photos by Pete Erickson / The Bulletin

Bonnie Lamb collects rainwater to water her garden



Photos by Pete Erickson / The Bulletin

Her backyard is mostly lava rock, but she's taken out the weeds and planted native plants like penstemons and scarlet gilia.

She's thought about solar panels, but her house faces the wrong direction to catch most of the sun. Still, Lamb said it's a possibility, even if it will require a little creativity.

Lamb's next-door neighbors, Harl and Linda Williams, have lived on Shasta since 1976 — when it was still a dirt road, Linda Williams remembers.

They share one car, Williams said, and her husband rides his bike to work.

“I do see other people just walking and riding their bikes,” she said.

She said she's thrilled that people are starting to pay attention to living green again — the couple started recycling in college in the 1970s, and Williams remembers saving up her tin cans to take to Portland before Bend had a recycling center.

She has been gardening organically for about three decades, she said, and grew vegetables in part to have organic food for her now-grown children, since it wasn't available in local stores.

“I think we're headed in the right direction, as far as I'm concerned,” Williams said. “It's just delightful to see it becoming more mainstream. It's not some weird hippie lifestyle.”

Dagmar Eriksson, who lives with her husband, Nils, next door to where Elliott and Scott are building, said they built their house with energy efficiency in mind more than five years ago.

“It's for the environment, and it lowers the energy cost,” she said.

They have in-floor heating, and put a big awning over their west-facing windows to shade the summer sun. They also have a water heater that only heats water when it's needed.

Eriksson thinks her new neighbors' plans are great, although she's curious to see what the neighborhood says when Elliott and Scott hold a community meeting to seek the city's OK for wind turbines.

“It's just all different,” she said.

Williams hopes Elliott and Scott can use their project as a way to

Maureen Sweeney, and her husband, Peter Geiser (not pictured), practice their motto on Shasta Place.



Photos by Pete Erickson / The Bulletin

Linda Williams, a Shasta Place resident, has been gardening organically for three decades



show people what can be done — even if it's beyond most families' budgets.

“That's quite the undertaking,” Williams said. “And I'm hoping it will inspire people to see what can be done ... I've got to applaud them for using their money in such an environmentally conscious way.”

Sweeney said the idea of building a house to such strict environmental standards seems like a good thing, since it could encourage others to try some of the smaller efficiency projects.

“Most people are not going to do what they're doing, especially from scratch,” Sweeney said. “But a lot of people may do some of it.”

There are different approaches to conservation, Chalfant said, adding that it's not like there are right or wrong ways to live in an environmentally friendly way.

“In a society that really gets excited by new technology, it's fascinating to watch what they're trying to do there,” he said. “But it's also in a community that values smaller, simpler, maybe not as expensive. You can buy the hybrid Prius, or you can take a few less trips and ride a bike occasionally, and probably have the same impact and do it a lot more cheaply.”

Kate Ramsayer can be reached at 541-617-7811 or at kramsayer@bendbulletin.com.



Photos by Pete Erickson / The Bulletin

Dagmar Eriksson, and her husband Nils (not pictured) used energy-efficient designs in their home, including an awning to shade the summer sun

Published Daily in Bend Oregon by Western Communications, Inc. © 2010

www.bendbulletin.com