

# Nation's 'First Suburb' Aims to Be Most 'Green'

By LINDA SASLOW

IT was last spring, during a dinner conversation with a friend about global warming, Thomas R. Suozzi said, that he got the idea to develop the nation's first "green" suburb in Nassau County.

"It's become very fashionable to talk about global warming," said Mr. Suozzi, the county executive. "But people are too busy paying their mortgages and taking care of their kids to think about ice sheets that could be melting 50 years from now. Their first reaction is: How can changing light bulbs or replacing windows in one house really make a difference? I believed that we needed a mass community movement, and we had to figure out how to do that locally."

Then came a place to do it: in Levittown, which is often called the country's first suburb and is celebrating its 60th anniversary.

Then came the way to do it: County officials would partner with eight energy, home-improvement and financial-services companies providing products, services and expertise aimed at reducing the hamlet's carbon emissions from energy use by 20 percent next year. Discounts and low-interest loans will be available for the project, Green Levittown, but residents will still pay much of the bill.

Bradford Tito, the county's deputy director of environmental coordination, said that the participating companies' efforts would make it affordable to install new boilers, make energy-efficient home renovations, use biofuels for heating, add solar heating and buy products that can quickly reduce home energy consumption.

Mr. Suozzi said the site for the project was chosen because "everybody's heard of Levittown, U.S.A."

"If we can make Levittown an example of easy environmentalism and show homeowners how they can make changes to save money and improve the environment," he said, "we can do an extreme makeover of an entire community that can become a model for the rest of the country."

The project will begin this month when canvassers em-

ployed by Citizens Campaign for the Environment, a nonprofit group based in Farmingdale, call on all 17,000 homes in Levittown. The goal is to make homeowners aware of the project, invite them to have a home audit, costing about \$300, with recommendations for energy efficiency, and describe the discounts and low-interest loans available.

Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign, said the goal was to have 5,000 homeowners participate in ways big (installing new boilers) and small (using compact fluorescent light bulbs). "The challenge is to help people understand that you have to spend money to save money," she said.

Ashok Gupta, director of the air and energy program for the Natural Resources Defense Council, based in New York City, said that "Green Levittown is an excellent start but needs to be matched with aggressive utility and tax incentives," and, eventually, stricter building codes.

Linda Garrett, an 18-year Levittown resident who works in the county Office for Constituent Affairs, said her first reaction to having an energy audit was negative because of the inconvenience. "But my husband felt, why wouldn't we want to learn how to save money?" she said. "If we can save \$1,000 a year by upgrading our light bulbs or improving our insulation, what do we have to lose?"

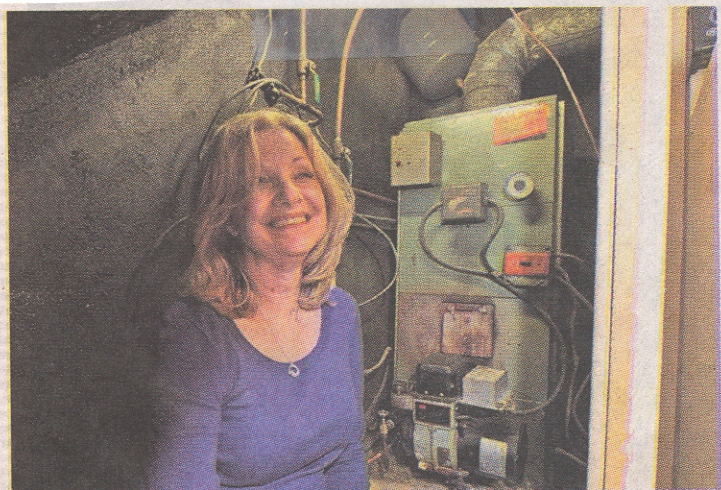
Lisa Marazzo, the Garretts' daughter, who lives next door in an updated version of the original Levittown Cape Cod house, was also cautious but more positive about the project.

"Anything to help the environment and save money, I'm in," she said. "But before we agree to anything, I want to find out more about it."

Mr. Tito said one place to start is the heating system. He estimated that 30 to 40 percent of the original boilers from 1947 were still in Levittown houses. "If one was replaced, 300 gallons of fuel would be saved each year, which would amount to an annual savings of between \$900 and \$1,200," he said.

The challenge now, Mr. Suozzi said, "is to get everybody excited."

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIRK CONDYLES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**FUEL SAVINGS** Linda Garrett, in her Levittown home, said she was at first reluctant to have an energy audit.