

# Public Impact Award: R. Carter Scott

This NESEA member is rapidly moving net zero into the mainstream

By Sally Pick



R. Carter Scott, owner and president of Transformations Inc., is at the forefront of creating a sustainable, affordable new norm for both custom and standard production homes. For his commitment and broad influence, NESEA has honored Scott with its first-ever Public Impact Award. The award was presented at the 2013 BuildingEnergy conference.

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Scott's Townsend, MA, firm has built more than 30 net zero or net-plus buildings, has 11 more in progress, and has more than 100 in the pipeline. Scott entered three buildings in this

year's Zero Net Energy Building Awards (ZNEBA) contest and had a hand in three others (see [www.NESEA.org](http://www.NESEA.org), under Programs, for more project details). And his buildings are affordable: the typical Transformations Inc. net-zero home has a retail construction cost of \$125 to \$150 per square foot.

Over the last eight years, Transformations Inc. has made incremental but steady energy improvements to the homes they build. In 2005, they achieved the equivalent of a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) rating of 50—that's 50 percent more efficient than a standard new house of the same size. They continued to push for a tighter envelope. In 2008, motivated by the prize money and publicity offered to ZNEBA winners, Scott built a home with 12-inch, double-studded, superinsulated walls and photovoltaics (PV), dropping the HERS rating to -4 while keeping the home affordable and marketable.

He now seals up all his buildings to HERS 40 and installs PV to bring the energy use to net zero or net-plus. Surplus energy is often devoted to charging electric vehicles, further reducing the home owners' impact on the climate.

According to Scott, three game changers related to PV made it economical to get to net zero and beyond. In 2009, the federal government lifted the cap on tax credits for PV, allowing PV owners to take a full 30 percent credit. In addition, market competition among PV manufacturers

has driven down prices significantly. Finally, in some states PV owners can sell their solar-generated power in a market for solar renewable energy certificates (SRECs).

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To further drive the market, Scott is working with a lender to make it possible to mortgage the full cost of these high-performing homes.

Rather than be proprietary about the successful formula he has developed, Scott has been teaching other builders how to get to net zero. But he's not losing business by sharing his concepts. Rather, he says, "The more I've been public with information, the more business has come my way." 

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*Sally Pick of SJP Environmental Consulting, LLC, offers home owners a friendly, unbiased perspective on saving energy and using renewables. She advises on cost-effective ways to reduce energy bills and energy losses, helps with navigating the maze of resources and incentives, and makes referrals to qualified energy contractors.*