



# The Gardner News

60 CENTS

20 PAGES

The Hometown Newspaper for Gardner, Ashburnham, Hubbardston, Phillipston, Templeton, Westminster, Winchendon

Vol. 205, No. 28

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS • PUBLISHING SINCE 1869, DAILY SINCE 1897

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2007

## LOCAL

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# Contractor to build 'green' houses in Westminster

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WESTMINSTER — In the next few weeks, a Leominster contractor is breaking ground on a subdivision that will use several energy-saving techniques unique to Central Massachusetts, according to Andy Sears, chairman of the Planning Board.

The 16 single-family homes, which will be constructed by Peter Phillips, owner of Phillips Builders, are going to generate electricity through solar cells and a few of the units will contain geothermal heating systems. Mr. Phillips said this design is a way to use less oil, gas and electricity.

## Homes would use solar, geothermal systems to save energy

"The government has enticed builders and contractors to work with ... experts to try to develop programs that (design) homes that are more efficient and ultimately save energy," Mr. Phillips said.

Although Mr. Phillips has constructed Energy Star-rated homes that use less energy through technological advances, his subdivision off Harrington Road will offer even more efficiency. Through Building America grants from the Department of Energy and consulting assistance from Building Science Corporation, Mr. Phillips said they are

aided in reaching greater energy savings.

"The goal of this project is to be 40 percent better than (Energy Star), so it's really a high energy-efficient house that involves use of solar panels, heating your hot water with solar during the day and a very tight (building) envelope," he said.

Most of the houses are going to use gas-fueled boilers, because they are 98-percent efficient, according to Mr. Phillips, but they will also use passive solar energy to heat hot water. Geothermal heat, a process that takes the warm temperature out of the ground

through an exchanger, is planned on a few of the units being built later this year.

Mr. Phillips purchased the subdivision as a 70-acre lot, committed 42 acres for conservation and plans to construct the buildings on the remaining acreage. The 2,500- to 2,800-square-foot, traditional colonial-style homes, are priced at \$439,000 to \$498,000.

"It makes the individual lot smaller, but everybody has access to that public land," he said of the property under conservation.

The "green development" philosophy

is a glimpse into the future," Mr. Phillips said.

"I think in 10 years, we're all going to be in this mode and we should be in order to conserve our energy and to build a better structure," he said. "We try to conserve and make the best use of the land and use of the building as well."

Mr. Sears said the subdivision plans for energy savings are at the "cutting edge of technology" in a time when there is a growing need to conserve the earth's natural resources.

"He's the only one in all of central Massachusetts who is producing homes like this," Mr. Sears said.

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