The Bullitt Reservation in the Western Region

The former summer home of Ambassador William C. Bullitt, Jr., the Bullitt Reservation is now home for The Trustees of Reservations’ Highland Communities Initiative and the Hilltown Land Trust staff. Through its “green” farmhouse and beautiful mix of forests and fields, the reservation is a dynamic demonstration area for exploring and sharing strategies to reduce our impact on the land and create a more resilient future. A center for outreach for land conservation and community preservation programs, the Bullitt Reservation is a community resource and gathering place. With miles of trails of spectacular landscape, the reservation is also a new destination for walking, hiking and showshoeing – and it is part of a growing network of protected wildlife habitat.

We invite you to explore the Bullitt Reservation both inside and out – and to work with us to build a more sustainable Highlands region and beyond.

The Trustees of Reservations and Sustainability

For The Trustees, sustainability means living and working in ways that ensure the health and vitality of our communities and our planet – not just for today, but for generations to come.

To truly make a difference, we must first lead by example, working to become sustainable in everything that we do. That means seeking creative ways to ensure the long-term health of our more than 100 special places across the state, supporting alternative and renewable energy sources, and finding innovative ways to go green – and, of course, sharing what we learn with our friends, visitors, and partners like you.

The gold, LEED-certified Bullitt Reservation farmhouse is just one example of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and sharing what we know. This is our third LEED-certified project – and our second green renovation. To explore another innovative renovation, visit the Appleton Farm Old House (www.thetrustees.org/oldhouse) in Ipswich, the home of our new Center for Agriculture & the Environment. Or you can see what it means to construct a green building from the ground up at our Doyle Center in Leverett (www.thetrustees.org/goldenpark), a state-of-the-art conference center.

Learn more at www.thetrustees.org/sustainability
The greenest building is the one that is already built!

The Bullitt Reservation demonstrates the ultimate practice in sustainability: reusing the land and building of Ashfield’s historic town poor farm – and later part of the summer estate of Ambassador William C. Bullitt, Jr. – for the new home of the Highland Communities Initiative and the Hilltown Land Trust. The building uses state-of-the-art “green” design and construction (see above right) – and will be certified gold by the United States Green Building Council and its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY. Our long-term goal is for the Bullitt farm house to be a zero-energy building, so it will produce all of the energy that it uses.

The renovated farmhouse is 50 percent more energy efficient than current standards require. With rigid foam insulation in the exterior walls, and spray foam in the inside walls, plus structural insulated panels on the roof – the building requires very little energy for heating and cooling. A heat pump heats and cools the building so we do not need to burn fossil fuels on site. And, when a few solar photo cell array is added to the barn’s south-facing roof, all of the electricity to heat, cool, and power the farmhouse’s lights and computers will come from the sun, making its energy sources completely renewable.

How to Make Your Own Home More Energy Efficient
Start by performing an energy audit on your home using a company like Next Step Living (www.nextsteplivinginc.com). Grants and tax credits are available for homeowners who make improvements that conserve energy, including installation of renewable energy alternatives. Learn more at the Center for Environmental Technology (www.cetonline.org) and the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (www.dsireusa.org).

WINDOWS. With old windows, what is the best way to make them energy efficient? Should you replace or restore them?

The answer depends on your construction or renovation project’s overall design goals. Here at Bullitt, we wanted to preserve as much of the farmhouse’s historic character as possible. But, since the windows were not original to the house – and it would have been difficult to retrofit the existing windows into the new exterior wall – we chose to replace and replace the windows.

How to Decide Between Replacement and Restoration
Learn which is the best option for you: visit the New England Window Restoration Alliance (www.windowstoreresetionne.org) and Do It Yourself Window Replacement (www.doityourself.com/scat/replace).

WATER CONSERVATION. You will not find a traditional lawn at the Bullitt Reservation. By mowing less and planting native grasses and trees, we are creating a healthier environment for our visitors and the creatures that live here. We are using rainwater from the farmhouse roof to nourish the surrounding garden – and the garden’s mix of native plants and grasses attract native insects, birds, and small mammals.

How You Can Conserve Water in Your Home
Learn about rain gardens and dual-flush toilets at the Low Impact Development Center (www.lowimpactdevelopment.org) and How Suflworks (http://howtosuflworks.com/dual-flush-toilets.htm).

RESPECT FOR THE LAND. The Trustees have protected more than 36 acres on and near the Bullitt Reservation. When it came to building the parking lot, we chose a site where a garage used to stand, rather than disturb new ground. The overflow lot will also filter pollutants out of stormwater before the water returns to the earth.

How You Can Protect Your Land
Learn about your own options for conserving land at The Trustees’ website (www.thetrustees.org/what-we-care-about/land).

RECYCLED AND SALVAGED MATERIALS. With help from our contractor, Quigley Builders, and some ingenious thinking, we are making sure that no materials from this project end up in a landfill. Just a few examples of the recycling and reuse of materials include: an oil-fired water heater from the basement was given to a local farmer to burn used vegetable oil; an old salvaged milk cooler found new life at a local dairy; and all materials removed from the farmhouse were sorted into piles of wood, metal, and plastic for recycling or re-use. As the building was reconstituted, LEED objectives were followed: along with the re-use of salvaged building materials, boards were re-used for counters, existing floors were salvaged, and Hardie Plank pre-finished siding, a sustainable choice, was used for the exterior. The metal roof is made from recycled metal and its high solar reflective index (SRI) will help to keep the building cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

How You Can Recycle and Reuse
Learn about recycling in your community at MassRecycle (www.massrecycle.org), and check out Hardie Plank’s sustainable siding options (www.jameshardie.com).

A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT. While many early “super-insulated” homes generated significant energy savings, they were later revealed to be too tight, leading to poor air circulation and resulting in what’s known as “building sickness syndrome.”

Here, we have installed Zehnder energy recovery ventilators, ensuring the farmhouse captures adequate fresh air and promoting energy efficiency. LEED guidelines prescribe the use of sealants, paints, and adhesives that emit the lowest level of toxic chemicals. And, with beautiful views of the landscape, plenty of natural light and ventilation, and an old sugar maple providing shade in summer, the farmhouse is promoting well being both inside and out.

How You Can Create a Healthy Environment at Home
Learn about energy recovery ventilators and how to cool the planet by planting trees at Zehnder America (www.zehnderamerica.com) and the Greenbelt Movement (www.greenbeltmovement.org).