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William Raveis buyer creates first retrofit passive house on east coast

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William Raveis Real Estate recently set a new precedent for green building standards by selling the first home retrofitted to a passive house on the East Coast and perhaps the entire country. The home, at a spacious 3,800 s/f, is located in Westport.

Passive houses are completely airtight and require only 10% of the heat needed in a standard home. Passive houses are a brand new concept in the United States, but popular in Europe. The passive house standard is the most rigorous in the world and is administered by the PassivHaus Institute in Darmstadt, Germany. PassivHaus Institute, founded by Professors Bo Adamson of Lund University, Sweden and Wolfgang Feist of the Institute for Housing and the Environment, was created in 1996. Since that time, only 32,000 passive homes have been created worldwide, most in Austria, Germany and other parts of Europe.

Receiving PassivHaus recognition is a lengthy process, which adheres to several core principles. A home must have proper solar orientation, be airtight, super insulate, have no thermal bridges and circulate fresh air through ventilation machines. These processes result in an extremely comfortable living environment, with temperatures remaining at 72 or 73 degrees Fahrenheit year-round. In addition, occupants need not worry about outside noise, which is barely noticeable due to the super insulation.

Doug McDonald, designer and developer with Green Muda LLC, purchased it in 2010 with the help of William Raveis listing broker, Jeanette Dryburgh. In less than one year, McDonald worked to renovate the home to achieve PassivHaus Institute standards. He stresses the incredible improvement in quality of life that can be attained in a passive house. "PassivHaus has created a modern building standard that has been consistently refined and the result is thermal protection from the elements. All the elements, hot, cold, rain, ice, snow. My daily experience living in a passive house is truly amazing. On the outside, passive houses are no different than conventional buildings, but on the inside, they are a lot more comfortable."

McDonald said "It is important to save architecturally important houses. This house was originally built for Oscar Levant in the 1930's by architect Barry Bryne, who was one of Frank LLoyd Wright's proteges."

Bill Raveis, CEO of William Raveis Real Estate strongly believes in providing some of the most unique properties to clients. "This incredibly comfortable, high performance structure was something we thought would be very appealing to clients," said Raveis. "As a company that continues to innovate with technology, it was only natural for us to support the most original standard for green technology in home-building. We believe this is only the beginning for passive houses in the northeast and throughout the country."

Dryburgh observed strong parallels between William Raveis' high caliber service and the quality of

life offered by passive homes. "William Raveis has consistently maintained the highest of excellence and continues in this pursuit to build homes that are of the utmost healthy quality," she said. "How perfect to now share with our clients a concept of total comfort and prime living conditions."

Mcdonald is also enthusiastic about spreading the benefits of passive houses to the public. He has held several public speaking engagements describing the benefits to building to the PassivHaus Institute standard. His talk "What is so special about a Passive House" was nominated for the TED Talks conference.

William Raveis Real Estate, Mortgage & Insurance is one of the top companies in the nation. It was ranked in 2011 by sales volume in Real Trends 500 Magazine as the #1 family-owned real estate company in the Northeast and the 8th largest real estate company in the USA. The innovative firm is known as an "Award-Winning Team," being nationally recognized as an industry leader in technology, marketing and Realtor education. Such recognition includes winning the coveted "Most Innovative Brokerage or Franchise" distinction and placing as a finalist for "Most Innovative Website or Web Service" at Inman News' 2011 Innovator Awards, held in San Francisco, California. William Raveis' award-winning website, raveis.com, draws more than 10 million visits annually and includes more than 300,000 MLS listings in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont.

For four consecutive years, William Raveis has also been named as "The Best Real Estate Company" in 2 states and as a "Best Place to Work" in 2010 and 2011 by the Boston Business Journal. In addition, the company was named as the "Top Workplace" in 2011 by FoxNewsCT and the Hartford Courant.

William Raveis Real Estate is a household name in its founding state, Conn. and is the #1 real estate company in Fairfield County. The company entered the Massachusetts marketplace in 2003 and, according to the 2010 closed sales volume in the Multiple Listing Service Pin, is now the largest independent brokerage in that state with 27 offices. William Raveis recently expanded into New York and presently has offices in Rye, Harrison, Katonah, Chappaqua, Tarrytown and Briarcliff Manor in Westchester County. In addition, the company has an office in Nyack, Rockland County. The firm has 2,700 highly trained sales professionals and 80 company-owned and affiliate offices.

For more information, visit raveis.com or blog.raveis.com.

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