

A STEP *Success* STORY

THE STATS

Home built in 1937 | 1,424 Sq. Ft.

Project cost.....	\$4,320
Rebates.....	\$2,660
Energy Cost Savings/Year*	\$563

*cost savings are estimates



Melissa and Rob Floyd

Melissa and Rob Floyd try to live their lives in an environmentally friendly way. Rob uses mass transit to commute to his job at the World Bank in Washington, DC. Melissa works at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, which is a relatively short commute from their home in University Park. That's one of the reasons the couple moved to the community in September 2010.

"We were seeking a central location for our jobs which led us to University Park," said Melissa, "but as soon as we saw it we fell in love with it. From solar power on many of the local businesses to the real community feel, this was exactly the community-centric neighborhood that we wanted."

Melissa says that she and Rob had heard about the STEP program before purchasing their home and were very intrigued with the idea. And the more they learned about it, they realized that it really fit their lifestyle. After attending a STEP informational session and meeting with their energy coach Suzanne, they scheduled a home evaluation.

"There are always things that you can do to update and improve your home, but it's rare to get an incentive that will

allow you to do so much and make such a big difference," says Melissa. "We wanted to make our home comfortable, as much as we wanted it to be energy efficient, so we were prepared to listen to the recommended upgrades and get the work done gradually. We started where we felt we had the greatest to gain, upstairs, where it also felt very warm. The audit found that we had no insulation in the ceiling and small attic space."

The Floyds used one of the Pepco Participating Contractors to add insulation, then installed an attic fan to allow retained heat to exit through the roof. In a short time they noticed a significant improvement in their energy costs. Added to the savings was a combined cash rebate to cover more than 60% of the out-of-pocket costs.

"When we moved into the community we were drawn by the community and by the potential to improve on our investment," said Melissa. "We are continuing to keep an eye on things, but we know our investment and our decision to take advantage of the program have been worthwhile since we are seeing a significant difference already."

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Home built in 1938 | 3,062 Sq. Ft.

Project cost.....\$3,420

Rebates.....\$2,210

Energy Cost Savings/Year*\$148

*cost savings are estimates



Bob Saks

Loretta and Bob Saks are only the second owners of their house, which was built in 1938, and have lived there for more than 20 years.

“We have lived in our house for long enough to know that we didn’t have any big issues of concern,” said Bob. “But curiosity got to me, and the possibility of saving a few bucks, so we attended the STEP informational session. Even when we left that evening we didn’t believe that the program had any relevance for us.”

Within a few days, and after giving it some further thought, the Saks’ said ‘What the heck’ to the \$100 investment and requested an energy evaluation with one of the Pepco Participating Contractors. “It was thorough and the blower door test showed that we had a significant amount of air leakage,” said Bob. “The initial evaluation found that the bulk of our issues were in the attic. It was poorly insulated, but because it was such a limited amount of space, we were skeptical that they were identifying the underlying problem.”

Following a second evaluation that also identified significant leakage, Bob and Loretta figured they really

did have an issue, but also wanted to make sure they were taking the best approach to avoid overspending. “The second vendor determined that our biggest area of concern wasn’t necessarily the attic, although he said there was a need for insulating the attic,” said Bob. “The more immediate concern was in the family room, an area we used regularly, which sits above the garage. We always felt like this room was drafty and not terribly comfortable, but now we had more evidence of a problem.”

“Once we had a reasonable estimate and a good idea of what was needed, we agreed to the project. And we are so pleased we did,” said Bob. “We have seen an improvement in comfort, have already noticed a difference in our utility bills and we are completely satisfied. When we talk to our friends about our experience we tell them they might be surprised by the findings...that their home may not be as ‘tight’ as they think. But also, that the expense doesn’t have to be a sticking point, necessarily. Fortunately for us we had the experience and knowledge of Suzanne and the program, but we also have seen that ignoring the issues for so long made us ignorant to the problems. Just like in life, it’s better to be informed.”

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Home built in 1916 | 2,440 Sq. Ft.

Project cost.....\$3,130

Rebates.....\$2,365

Energy Cost Savings/Year*\$1,168

*cost savings are estimates



Sandy Remancus and Brandt Witte

Sandy Remancus and her husband Brandt Witte knew they had some issues with their home when they moved there in the early 2000s. “There was a constant draft through the house, some cracked windows in the basement, and some low-level road noise since we were located right near a main road. We knew we would have to address the issues at some point, but we didn’t really have it at the top of our priority list for several reasons, not the least of which was the feared expense,” said Sandy. “So over the years, we sort of grew accustomed to the draft and the noise. But my mother-in-law stays with us quite often and always comments about the draftiness, and as it turned out that was really what pushed us to investigate.”

In December 2011, Sandy and Brandt learned about the STEP Program coming to University Park and decided to complete a home energy evaluation. “We had reached a point where the costs of heating our home with oil heat were getting to the extreme, so putting out a hundred dollars to determine where we could begin to save some money made sense. Surprisingly, the audit turned up some easy solutions to get us started, but also identified some larger areas where we could focus more of our attention,” said Sandy.

Sandy said that initially they started to change out light bulbs, replacing regular bulbs with CFLs. They also replaced latches on some of their older windows, which helped to keep the

windows closed tight and reduce some of the draft. But there was a bigger issue that really surprised Sandy.

“There was one side of the house where most of the windows had been replaced just before we moved in so we figured there weren’t any issues with them. The audit found just the opposite,” Sandy said. “When the windows were installed, they were never caulked, so the inspector showed me where you could actually look right through the space and see outside the house. That really shocked me, but it also was an easy and inexpensive repair that made a huge difference. And on top of the energy savings, we benefitted by reducing the noise from the road and from the rattling of the windows when it got windy.”

Sandy said they haven’t been able to measure how effective their repairs have been yet, but they continue to find ways to save energy and money.

“We wouldn’t have even taken the first steps, and couldn’t have accomplished everything that needed to be done, without the incentives and support of the STEP Program,” said Sandy. “Once we saw the range of options that could make a difference, even without the incentives, it was too difficult to ignore the benefits or at least select a few items to get us started.”

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Home built in 1957 | 1,960 Sq. Ft.

Project cost.....	\$4,090
Rebates.....	\$2,545
Energy Cost Savings/Year*	\$548

*cost savings are estimates



Tassie Hanna

20-year University Park residents Tassie Hanna and Jayson Amster are only the second owners of their house, which was built in 1957. They knew there were some issues with their home. But when it came right down to it, said Tassie, “insulating the attic wasn’t really a priority for us. As it was, the attic was used only for storage and it was very cluttered and messy, so finding the time and energy just to clean the space out to do work was a daunting task.”

When Tassie and Jayson first saw the STEP informational flyers they thought the program seemed too good to be true. But they attended the launch event, listened to what was being presented and even spoke to some contractors. “It seemed too easy,” Tassie said, “but with Suzanne helping with the paperwork, scheduling and much of the legwork, we felt like we had to at least get the home assessment.”



Following their evaluation, Tassie said she had a good idea about their priorities and the costs and they set about the task of “making up for lost time and money.” They started by

replacing a freezer that had been failing for a couple of years but which was, by Tassie’s estimate, about 40 years old. “Just replacing the freezer with an Energy Star appliance made a difference and within the first two months we saw our energy bill drop close to 20 percent,” she said.

But the real shock for Tassie came when the attic project was getting started. “I dreaded having to pull everything out of the attic so the contractors could work, but they told me it wasn’t that bad. All I had to do was move the storage to the center of the attic, they covered it with plastic, and they worked around it. Had I known it was going to be that easy I might have done something sooner.”

Tassie said their house is much more comfortable and the temperature is more consistent than it was before the work was done. She said it lost the ‘draftiness’ and realized that they had been ignoring a significant problem. She said they continue to see the benefits of the work in reduced bills.

“We could’ve done everything that was recommended on our own, but we probably wouldn’t have,” said Tassie. “We’re so thankful we took the time to learn about the STEP Program and for the wonderful and objective advice we received from Suzanne.”

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Home built in 1923 | 1,244 Sq. Ft.

Project cost.....\$7,300

Rebates.....\$4,355

Energy Cost Savings/Year*\$443

*cost savings are estimates



Mark Brice and Barbara Denman

When you live in an old home, you grow accustomed to the fact that there will always be another project, that there may be some parts of the house that heat or cool better than others, and that when there is a project to be done, you have to prioritize. Mark Brice and his wife Barbara Denman know this all too well, living in a University Park home that was built in 1922.

“We have lived here long enough to know that there were too many areas that needed work for us to take care of everything,” said Mark. “At the same time, we had some idea about where our biggest problems were, and that was with the heating and cooling of the house. We have wall radiators powered by gas to heat the home in the colder months, and window units for cooling when the weather gets too hot. We were also quite sure that the home had never been insulated, so anything we tried to do to adjust the temperature was going to last a short period of time and be expensive.”

Mark said one of the best things that he and Barbara could have asked for was the STEP Program. “The Program gave us an opportunity to do something that needed to get

done, and to do it for less,” Mark said. “We started by replacing the little bit of insulation that was in the attic, then had foam insulation pumped into the exterior walls. Just with that, we noticed an immediate improvement in temperature control and draft reduction. Of course to get that work done, they had to cut holes in the sides of the house, which were patched when the work was done.” According to Mark, that left some cosmetic work that will be completed later.

While Mark and Barbara haven’t experienced the winter extremes yet since the work was completed in March and the weather hasn’t been severe, they don’t know the financial benefits of the work yet. But Mark said that he would still tell people who have the opportunity to participate in the STEP program to “Do it. Do it. Do it.” The rebates reduced their out-of-pocket costs by more than one-half. “It’s also the right thing to do,” Mark added. “We try to live our lives with an eye on being environmentally friendly and energy conscious. We drive fuel-efficient cars for the same reasons, to reduce energy consumption and help to save the environment. It might be a big expense at the outset, but you look at the long-term and the bigger picture and it just makes sense.”

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