

## Efficiency is the New Green, the New Oil, the New...

By [Peter Troast](#) - March 17th, 2009 Energy Circle

A year ago, Stephen Cowell wrote in the Huffington Post that [Energy Efficiency is the new oil](#). He wrote:

Sure, insulation may not be as glamorous as solar panels or wind turbines. But energy efficiency is the new oil. An ongoing strategy to fund and expand existing conservation programs should be a cornerstone of Obama's plan, not just a pebble on the path to a better energy future. A significant investment in these programs will continue to stimulate the economy long after the money is spent.

More recently, [Plugged In](#) noted that [efficiency is the new green](#), pointing out that the switch is not simply from green to greenback. "Underneath the desire to earn a good ROI is the desire to feel smart and in control in this unpredictable, out of control economy." Just behind the wisdom of homeowners, comes the wisdom of venture capitalists. We weren't surprised to read [Kevin Bullis'](#) recent article in [Technology Review](#) that energy efficiency is a promising area for investment. He quotes Draper Fisher Jurvetson managing director [Don Wood](#), who notes that "efficiency is where you'll get the highest marginal return on investment." Interestingly, investors are paying particular attention to sensors and controls - technologies that will allow homeowners and utilities to reduce energy use.

The return on investment in energy efficiency is as real for homeowners as it is for venture capitalists. We know that [monitoring use](#) - simply knowing how much energy a household or business uses - will reduce consumption, a promising reality for the bottom line and also the earth. In fact, everywhere I go, it's incredibly exciting to see an increased emphasis on this reality: home owners have enormous - and largely untapped - potential to invest in energy efficient technologies that promise remarkable returns.

Whether described as the new oil, the new green, or simply the new wise investment, ultimately home energy efficiency is common sense for new and existing buildings. This point was drilled home in a series of practical, thought-provoking sessions in last week's [Northeast Sustainable Energy Association Building Energy 09 conference](#). There can be no doubt that we have a long road ahead in the science of building efficiency. At the same time, there is no doubt that efficiency, and in particular, putting the [tools to increase efficiency](#) in the hands of consumers, is the right first move regardless of whether your motivation is to save money, save the planet, or both.