

Certified financial planner invests money to improve home's energy performance

Lauren Sigman is a smart and savvy Certified Financial Planner ® at [Sigman Financial Fitness](#) ® with over 35 years of experience in the Denver metro area. While Lauren may know a lot about financial planning, what she really wanted to know more about was if she could save money and improve comfort in her own home by investing in energy efficiency.

Not only has Lauren lived in her home for 14 years, she also runs her business from home, requiring her to use electricity and gas 24/7. Each year, she noticed her energy bills increasing, both in the winter and summer. In June of 2014 Lauren had some money to either invest in the stock market or invest in her home. As a Certified Financial Planner®, she asked herself what improvements she could do to reduce consumption since she knew she'd be in her home for at least another 14 years. "I looked at it as, what is the payoff to determine what made sense," said Lauren.



Figure 1 – Lauren Sigman climbing in Eldorado Canyon, Colorado.

First Things First

In June she chose to start with a home energy audit, which cost approximately \$185. A home audit is a comprehensive assessment of a home, can take 3-4 hours and is done by a certified energy auditor. To Lauren, the obvious things were changing out her hot halogen office lights to LED's, which contributed to her comfort issues as well. "People need to understand what's out there, and do their research when choosing LED bulbs." She was impressed with the choices available in store and from distributors. Because Lauren lives in

Denver, her auditor put her in touch with an energy advisor from the [Denver Energy Challenge](#) to help figure out next steps from her audit report.

Choosing Effective Upgrades

In August, Lauren chose to add insulation and air sealing, as well as replace her 14 year old furnace. From a comfort stand point, this replacement made financial sense for Lauren. However, she also pointed out that "there is no point in buying a new furnace unless you do insulation and air sealing." "Insulating and sealing up your home first ensures that you reduce your energy use. Purchasing a properly sized furnace to heat your home is step 2," said energy advisor Jacqueline Tallichet. Energy advisors provide as much support as homeowners need from start to finish – and at no cost. Once a homeowner has identified upgrades, advisors can help them locate contractors, review bids, and locate rebates saving the homeowner time and headaches.

Community Solar Investment

With the extra money Lauren had, she also chose to invest in a community solar garden with [Clean Energy Collective](#). She received a flyer for a project in Lowry, and her business partner, Sam Jones of [All Season Financial Advisors](#), helped her run the numbers to see what the return on investment (ROI) and reduction on her monthly bills would be. "This is another area where the Denver Energy Challenge advisors can help homeowners by reviewing bids and help evaluate whether investments are possible or useful," said Tallichet. Through this solar investment, Lauren was able to save \$100/month on her utility costs.

Overall Satisfaction with Investment

Now that Lauren has completed her upgrades, she's completely satisfied with her investments and participation in the Denver Energy Challenge. Her energy advisor, Jacqueline, was easily accessible via email which helped make things run smoothly, given that Lauren was on a busy schedule. In the summer Lauren's utility costs were \$300-\$350/month, and in the coldest part of winter she was paying \$275-\$300/month. "And I didn't even feel particularly warm or cool so it was driving me nuts," said Lauren. Lauren can now keep her home at 68, when she used to have to run it at 72. She just received her first heating bill with the new furnace and it was \$150. In the summer it was \$80. "I am consistently saving \$100/month from solar and reduced usage. Just think, if this had been available to me when I moved in 14 years ago; how much money I would have saved!" said Lauren.



Figure 2 – Lauren hard at work helping others make smart investments.

Paying It Forward

[Lauren](#) and her business partner [Sam Jones](#) host different "[Solution Series](#)" workshops focused on conserving personal cash flow, investing, and things people can do to make their money work harder for them. "If you will be in your home for a long time, look at the dollars that leak out every day," said Lauren. The Denver Energy Challenge is a free program for Denver residents focused on helping homeowners reduce energy costs while improving comfort. They do this by providing residents with an energy advisor who stays with the homeowner from start to finish. "I feel that it is very forward thinking of the City to offer a program like this," said Lauren. To learn more about the Denver Energy Challenge and see what upgrades make sense for your home visit: www.DenverEnergy.org or call 720-865-5520.