

# Q&A Perspectives:

## Residential Designer Robert Platt



**Connected Design: Tell us about your business – and how you became involved in collaborating with custom integration firms that install connected-home technologies for homeowners.**

Robert Platt: We are a residential design firm specializing in major renovation design. The idea is to save as much of an existing structure as possible while achieving the design intent of the owner. In the end, we save about 18 percent of the structure at a minimum – and usually much more. That means less impact on the environment, landfills, and old-growth communities. The home rarely resembles the base we start with. For the property owners willing to pursue this avenue, rather than bulldozing and starting over, we see it as the highest form of recycling in the industry. We're very proud of our clients that choose this path. To that end, we are getting more calls for investigation into renewable energy options for their projects. It has been an adventure, to say the least.

**When – and why – did you begin factoring in intelligent energy storage solutions offered by sonnen into your design plans?**

It's a long and winding road... hey, I think I have a song here! Seriously, it has been. First, we had to wind our way through the PV (photovoltaic) world. Once we established a PV vendor and a projected average yield, we came to the issue of how to use the energy we proposed to harvest from the sun – another interesting leg of the journey that ultimately led us to sonnen as the most effective solution, without question. This facet was a consideration of so many factors: industry tenure, successful installations, product options, long-term recycling considerations, overall performance, effective life and long-term support, among many other concerns; sonnen opened us to a world of new options – primarily, beyond truly effective storage, managing that energy wisely. With sonnen's guidance, storage options in union with Adapt Energy technology were the door to success, in this instance.

**What were the main benefits of including sonnen products into your planning?**

They stood out as an independent, proactive solution. They are a more costly solution, yet a better value. Cost cannot be the single point of evaluation in this emerging industry. The first consideration was the "fine print" with other vendors. Like other technologies in the housing industry overall, pro-rated performance and subsequent warranties are the rule. We saw

the competitors with a notable diminishing return on performance and a subsequent shrinking warranty... Since I don't have 10 or 20 years to sort it out through experience, sonnen addresses that performance expectation with a warranty that supports their claims. Next came the very real consideration of recycling at the end of the system's life... sonnen has a proactive plan founded in the very architecture of the system. I liked that. In the planning stage, they offered us real support. The only people that find the renewable energy world easy to navigate are those in the renewable energy world. For those of us with other missions, not so much.

They brought assistance to the table that aided enormously in building our first custom system and our understanding of the options. They knew what questions to ask so that we could provide the appropriate data to develop a solution. For example, with sonnen, we developed a rather impressive level of expectation in performance... [It] has certainly been a collaborative effort, with sonnen as the leading edge.

**Do regional factors come into play when specifying sonnen product solutions for a project? Are there special circumstances – for example, the location of a home, or the amount of time or the seasons the owner will likely spend in that home – that make specifying sonnen solutions all the more important?**

With PV, region, orientation and so much more are certainly dominant factors shaping performance. However, with sonnen, storage is actually the mitigating factor that overcomes much of the challenge. The first part of the question is greatly a product of geography and fate. Planning helps to a degree, but some things cannot be planned away. Conversely, sonnen storage allows us to handshake with the physical environment and use the grid in a more flexible way, thus bringing the best of both energy sources together. I'd say that's more than important. It's critical... Their personnel have stayed with us every step of the way and responded to changes in scope and scheduling without a hesitation. Great people. In addition, they listen. It's voices like mine, a person outside of the industry, they need to hear. We are the link to the consumers, and sonnen gets that.

Robert Platt, of the Atlanta, Ga.-based firm Habitations LLC, spoke with Connected Design in general terms about why he factors sonnen intelligent energy solutions into his planning process with clients.