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Precious customers

Bad customer service has taken on a new meaning for me during this recession. Behavior I once dismissed as that of someone too busy to give me better service, I now recognize as behavior of someone with a bad attitude, or who is unwilling to make an effort.

Last month, I noticed a new running shoe store opened a few doors down from the store I've been buying running shoes at for the past 20 years. I felt compelled to stop in and take a look at this new competitor. I'd be foolish not to comparative shop, especially now.

So, on the way home from work one night I stopped in. As I walked into the store the sales person informed me (with a little attitude) the store was closed and I couldn't come in. I looked at my watch and noticed it was five minutes before six o'clock. On one hand, I understand the urge to go home after a long day at work, and the possibility that management might have strict rules about working past closing. But on the other hand, we're in a recession and I was a living, breathing customer. Plus, technically, they were still open.

I've noticed recently what I perceive as a lack of appreciation for my business at many stores and restaurants. I'm no one special, but still, I have money to spend. Am I being unreasonable? Closing time is closing time, I suppose. But seriously, would you turn away potential clients just because they walk in your door five minutes before closing?

Following are two more stories, but they're about people who get it.

While at a trade show last month, a colleague told me what a great price he locked in for his hotel room. When he arrived at the hotel, he noticed the lobby looked empty. Then, the man at the registration desk informed him he had been upgraded to a much better room. When asked why, the desk clerk said, "You're here, so we might as well make you happy." What a great way to look at it.

An even more compelling story, I believe, is that of the gate agent at the airport on my way to the American Institute of Architects Convention. I approached the man and asked for the best way to secure a seat in an exit row. He took the time to explain that with my relatively low frequent flyer status, I had almost no chance. I thanked him for his time and began to walk away to find a seat.

As I approached an open seat, I felt someone tap me on my shoulder. It was the gate agent I just finished talking to. He told me the man behind me in line was in a middle seat in an exit row and wanted to exchange it for an aisle seat, which I possessed. The gate agent hustled almost 100 feet to chase me down while five people waited in line, just to give me what I wanted. I was shocked at my luck, and at the agent's willingness to go the extra mile to help a customer.

Now is the time to practice the best customer service you can produce. Now is the time to win customers. Show them you're happy you're talking to them. Tell them you know they could go to your competitor, then make them stay with you. Don't take business for granted.



Rob Heselbarth, Editor

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Single-family builder confidence rises in May

WASHINGTON — Builder confidence in the market for newly built, single-family homes improved for a second consecutive month in May to the highest level since September 2008, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index released mid-May. The index rose two points to 16 in May.

"Builders are responding to what they perceive to be some of the best home buying conditions of a lifetime," said Joe Robson, NAHB chairman and builder from Tulsa, Okla. "You're not likely to get a better deal in terms of mortgage rates than what's available right

now. Combine that with the affordable prices, multitude of home choices and \$8,000 tax credit for first-time buyers that are now available, and you have a very appealing set of reasons to make a move."

"The fact that the May HMI continued to tick up from April's five-point increase provides confirming evidence that the improved confidence level was no fluke," added David Crowe, NAHB chief economist. "This continued increase indicates that home builders feel we're at or near the bottom of the market and that positive signs lie ahead for builders and potential home buyers, provided that

builder access to production credit significantly improves."

Crowe also noted that recent announcements made by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that would enable first-time home buyers to use the new \$8,000 federal tax credit at the closing table are especially encouraging to builders. "We appreciate (HUD) Secretary Donovan's efforts to make the tax credit more useful to buyers by addressing the biggest hurdle to first-time purchasers — having enough cash for a suitable down payment," he said.

Architects list green preferences

PITTSBURGH — Architects say durability is the most important attribute for a green building product, according to a new industry survey commissioned by PPG Industries. Durability is followed by Energy Star compliance, life-cycle assessment, no- or low-volatile organic compound content and the ability to source products regionally.

Architects surveyed say durability also is the most important attribute among building products in general, ranking slightly ahead of price. Product warranties, features and technical support also were named by approximately 40 percent of architects.

James Bogdan, PPG manager, green building initiatives, construction market team, said he was not surprised architects consider durability a key sustainability factor for their building products. "We hear a lot of dialogue in the architect-engineer community about committing to a 'century of ownership' concept that encompasses a building's design as well as its construction and operational lifetime. When you consider those factors, it's no wonder that durability is at the top of the list when it comes to defining what makes a product good and what makes a product green," Bogdan said.

Architects said their most important sources of product information are manufacturers' web sites (76 percent) and Internet searches (59 percent). Nevertheless, responses showed traditional resources such as manufacturers'

sales representatives (54 percent) and technical binders (46 percent) remain popular.

Inventories continue to shrink

WASHINGTON — The number of newly built single-family homes on the market shrank to 297,000 units in April, thinning supplies to their lowest level since May 2001, according to government figures released late in May. The report noted that the pace of new-home sales held virtually even with the previous month, at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 352,000 units.

"The fact that the new-homes inventory is now below the 300,000 mark shows that builders have made substantial progress in winnowing down their backlogs to a much more comfortable level," noted Joe Robson, NAHB chairman and a home builder from Tulsa, Okla.

"This continued reduction in the new-homes inventory helps bring supply in line with demand, which is an important step toward the market's recovery. We can expect the pace of new home sales to bounce along the bottom a bit before picking back up towards the end of this quarter," noted David Crowe, NAHB chief economist.

Sales of newly built, single-family homes recorded a marginal 0.3 percent gain to 352,000 units in April, up from a downwardly revised sales pace in March. Meanwhile, the inventory of new homes for sale declined 4.2

percent in April to 297,000 units, a number which reflects a 10.1-month supply at the current sales pace.

FMI: Industry not prepared

RALEIGH, N.C. — Most sectors of the construction industry are facing their most severe downturn in more than 25 years, so FMI Corp. conducted a survey to determine how the industry is responding.

FMI surveyed 230 of the most influential executives in the U.S. construction industry to gauge exactly how leading firms were preparing for a rapidly changing landscape. Participants were asked to rate how much the competitive environment had intensified over the past 12 months.

Briston Blair, author of the report, said, "Our findings suggest that while most companies anticipate a high degree of future uncertainty, they have not adapted the way they develop strategy. As uncertainty increases, so too should the level of preparation and depth of analysis that is used to determine a go-forward direction. Far too many contractors have yet to adapt to the changing context."

Survey highlights include: Many firms do not feel adequately prepared for the uncertainty that lies ahead; firms in the middle market anticipate the most uncertainty and are the least prepared; lack of in-depth planning is preventing some firms from developing a strategy that aligns with shifting industry context.

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Misery loves company

It was refreshing hearing that a builder of your stature [Jay Grant] had to also change to accommodate the changing economy ["Managing post-sale relations," February/March 2009, pg. 24]. I always assumed smaller guys would have to bend over backward to stay afloat. I'm obviously wrong.

I own a design firm that also builds our clients' high-end dreams. Whether it is a remodel or new construction in the multi-million dollar range, these clients can be a handful. Even though the market is very slow, we more often find ourselves doing more personal things for our clients that have nothing to do with construction or closing.

Some of the things my staff and I have been doing for these clients are: physically helping them move in; building their gazebos and/or detached covered patios and putting together their patio furniture; helping them place their furniture; helping them organize; feeding them the day of the move; and paying my personal housekeeper to help them clean up while moving.

I find this to be a bit much; however, we've had to endure this with smiles on our faces. My revenue has been down over a half million dollars, I've had to reduce my staff (whom I love dearly) by 11 people, and at this point I don't know what will happen

this year. I will not give up hope because those of us that have faith and can hold out will be on top when the market returns.

Eric Spurlock, AIBD

Eric Spurlock Custom Home Design

Albuquerque, N.M.

ericspurlock.com

Things aren't all bad

Good morning Jay [Grant]. We build homes between \$140,000 and \$300,000, and believe it or not we have been doing pretty well for ourselves here in the Midwest. We've sold eight homes since December and have seen a little more traffic on weekends. Gas prices dropping have helped drastically as has the tax credit for first-time home buyers. This little spurt of activity we've seen is a relief. I guess you could say we are doing OK. I don't know what your views are on the stimulus package, but we can only hope for the best.

As I see it, if people are not working, it doesn't matter how low the interest rates are or how much a tax incentive is given; people need to get to work. But you hit the nail on the head in your article ("Tough times, tough questions," February/March 2009, pg. 12). Hesitating on advertising, hiring, laying off, building an inventory home — you name it — we have run into the same type of problems. And buyers are very wary of builders that don't have at least half of their subdivision built out.

The whole problem in my view is the media. I can't stand negative reporting when I know there are bright spots in this world. There are 90 percent of people working in this country, and gas prices are at the same level as in 2004.

Larry and Missy Evans

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PVC toxicity clarified

If you are concerned about truth and facts, you will want to correct an inaccuracy in the article, "Unstacking the Deck" by John Wagner in the February/March 2009 issue of *Residential Design & Build* [pg. 16].

Mr. Wagner states the following about PVC decking: "All-plastic PVC decking is another product that has resistance to scratching, staining and fading that is superior to composite decking. But PVC decking has been getting slammed for the toxicity of the manufacturing process, which releases mercury and dioxin. That said, there is a green case to be made for PVC's performance and durability. If you use PVC, you are less likely to harvest, manufacture and ship replacement products, which therefore makes PVC a viable alternative to wood; using lifecycle analysis, PVC holds up well in comparison to wood."

While Mr. Wagner presents many of the attributes of PVC decking, the assertion that the manufacturing process is toxic and releases mercury and dioxin should be clarified. PVC is an extremely small source of dioxin (less than 0.5 percent), so small that levels in the environment would be essentially unchanged even if vinyl were not being manufactured. The production of PVC is contained in a totally closed processing loop. In fact, dioxin levels in the environment have been declining for decades, (90 percent since 1987, according to data from the U.S. EPA. [Since then] production and use of vinyl have soared (visitdioxinfacts.org).

A similar perspective can be presented for mercury. Mercury is used by a dwindling number of U.S. manufacturers in the chlor-alkali process, a precursor to the manufacture of PVC. Once again, the process, which is conducted in a totally enclosed loop, represents a fraction of total mercury emissions and after several chemical reactions mercury is not present in PVC. During the past 10 years, total U.S. mercury emissions have dropped 45 percent.

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Richard G. Walker

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Final payment solution

Great article on the final payment (January 2009, pg. 10). We have had many bad experiences lately with collecting our final payment. It seems to be harder than ever.

We arrived one time for our final closing meeting to review our closing book and discuss the final \$30,000 payment. Unfortunately for us, 10 minutes prior to arriving, the client had opened a letter notifying her that the bank was canceling her credit line. The story has a somewhat happy ending; the client has made monthly payments and has promised to have the final payment paid in full by July 2009. Another client of ours worried about his bank doing the same to him, so he asked if he could deposit half of the contract (roughly \$200,000) into our account as in his words, "I felt that my money is safer with my contractor than in my own bank." I wondered what kind of times are we living in when a contractor is now more trusted than a federally insured bank?

This experience has made our company

look at the possibility of these situations occurring more often as the economy slides. So we came up with a simple solution. Immediately after the agreement/contact is complete, we open a fund control/escrow account for the entire amount. This provides value to our company and our client. The account is FDIC insured up to \$250,000 and is monitored by the client who has full control of dispersing the funds. The account is interest-bearing and the client receives all interest. The fund control

We don't have to worry about a client's bank canceling a line of credit

company is in charge of collecting all lien releases prior to dispersing the funds. The payment schedules are set in advance upon completion of inspections performed by the local building department. Once the building department approves a phase of work, the client receives a voucher to sign allowing

fund control to wire the funds for that phase of work. The predetermined funds are then electronically wired into our bank account.

The benefit to our company is that we know the funds are securely held in an account and that we don't have to worry about a client's bank canceling a line of credit during construction. Another benefit is that we can complete the whole transaction by e-mail, so the days of chasing down a client to pick up a check are gone. When it comes to change orders, the client can deposit the change order money into the fund control account and we collect once the work is complete and the client approves the voucher.

We should have been doing business this way 18 years ago. Even in a booming economy, this seems to be the most professional way of contracting. We have just started the process but I am convinced this will really work well for our company.

Jason Larson, CR

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Smarter contracting

Get your contracts worded properly and it will translate to more business

By Luis Jauregui, AIA

A successful outcome to a design/build project has as much to do with contracting smartly as it does with providing professional services. It's important to understand what your firm's focus is and then formulate contracts with terms that reflect the services and product you choose to provide. Consumer-friendly paperwork will set positive expectations.

As a business approach, determine a design niche and be true to your aesthetic ethics. From your first conversation with a new prospect, begin to ascertain whether the project and client are a good fit for your company. Not every job is worth your time or liability risk, although we're all more willing to be more forgiving in this economic climate. So, learn to trust your sixth sense.

Develop a manner by which you "interview" prospects when they first call your office. Use this opportunity to ask as many leading questions as possible. Callers usually are seeking information and they will appreciate an informative exchange that will save everyone's time. Understanding your product specializa-

tion will help you determine if the project is a good match.

For example, we seek projects that require a high level of architectural development, which we know will require a higher level of investment. Therefore, we always lead the conversation to budget on the first phone call. Design/Build is an educational process for the consumer, and it's in our interest to provide realistic information. Since clients are often reluctant to discuss budget parameters, we reference our online portfolio for examples of quality detail and corresponding range of cost. We can determine pretty quickly if the job doesn't fit our criteria and refer them to another source, ending the conversation in a very friendly manner.

I believe in tailoring contractual agreements to meet the needs of the majority of clients rather than worrying that certain terms might not work for all. On the other hand, we are always flexible and open to negotiating terms in order to earn the job if it's a request within reason.

It's important to recognize that the financial growth of your design/build business will be determined by construction profits. One of the most important lessons I have learned in my design/build career is to tie design and construction together contractually. This leap has resulted in our conversion of nine out of 10 projects to construction and provided for steady cash flow and structured growth. Great architecture is still critically important and will set you apart, but it's doubtful that architecture will be your primary profit center because most clients underestimate the impact of good design.

About 10 years ago, we made a fundamental change to our architectural contracts. We converted the document from an "Architectural Services" to a "Pre-Construction" contract. We still provide similar design services with similar fee structure, but we added the binding caveat that document ownership conveys only upon

construction completion. Unless our company is contracted for construction, the documents are not released and the project cannot be built. This is a very reasonable position for you to take if it's understood that architectural services are available only with construction commitment.

Being flexible and open to customizing terms to accommodate your client's particular concerns goes a long way to building good will. For instance, if a client strongly objects to the terms regarding document ownership, we compromise by offering to release the documents at the start of construction rather than upon completion. Obviously it requires a large dose of good faith from your clients to commit to turnkey services, and it will be your expertise and reputation that ultimately will make it palatable.

Until you provide a good estimate of cost, neither you nor your client will be able to ascertain whether the project is viable for construction. That's why cost is such an important design tool. We provide a well-studied preliminary cost at the same time we present preliminary floor plans and preliminary specifications, at which time the client will have invested a proportionally small amount of time and money. If the client is dissatisfied for any reason, they can terminate the contract but the creative work to date will remain our property. ■

Luis Jauregui, AIA, has been a member of the local and national chapters of the American Institute of Architects for more than 20 years. He is an active leader within the Homebuilders Association of Austin, Texas, serving as president, and as director at the local, state and national homebuilders' association levels. Read past columns at rdbmagazine.com.





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What's your story?

Get your company's story straight before you tell it

By Joseph Dellanno

"Once upon a time" usually stirs up warm childhood memories about classic bedtime stories being read by someone very close, perhaps a mother or father. As the story unfolds, good and evil characters become real. Characters come to life and a diabolical plot thickens or perhaps a magical land becomes real. The storyteller adds individual character voices and spooky sound effects to make the story more engaging to the young listener's imagination. Page by page, chapter by chapter, the story becomes reality to both

over the years, and who has played those roles? How many people have you written out of your book for one reason or another? Is your company's story all about you, like a long-winded autobiography, or is it about the unique individuals with whom you've met and wanted to develop long-lasting business relationships?

Many business owners struggle to communicate their company's story with potential customers because the story is incomplete, it is told in a bland way, or they simply make up a story right in front of their customers. Shooting

your story from the hip can lead to disaster and frustration.

Many company stories begin like so: "We have been in business for X number of years and have won this national award, and we provide professional services to our customers from start to finish, etc."

Why do people have a

telling their story. They have no social etiquette filters and let out a jet stream of information which pins the listener uncomfortably against the wall for 20 minutes.

We best remember those stories that relate to us personally. Your company's story needs to relate to your audience and to the individual listeners that may be interested in your services. Create a general version of the story when you advertise to a large number of people and another more specific version when you are marketing to a neighborhood in which you are working. Each member of your team should project similar versions of the company story to ensure the message is consistent.

We have been telling stories to each other since humans made their homes in caves and painted characters and events on the walls. Their stories were creative, simple and clear. They often told about the experience of the hunt, who they worshipped and who their leaders were. When you are telling your story, remember that a good story generally includes interesting places, well-defined characters, comedy, tragedy and for the most part a happy ending. You have worked in interesting places. You work with many interesting characters. Be funny. Tell them how you overcame adversity on a particular project and how everyone lived happily ever after. ▀

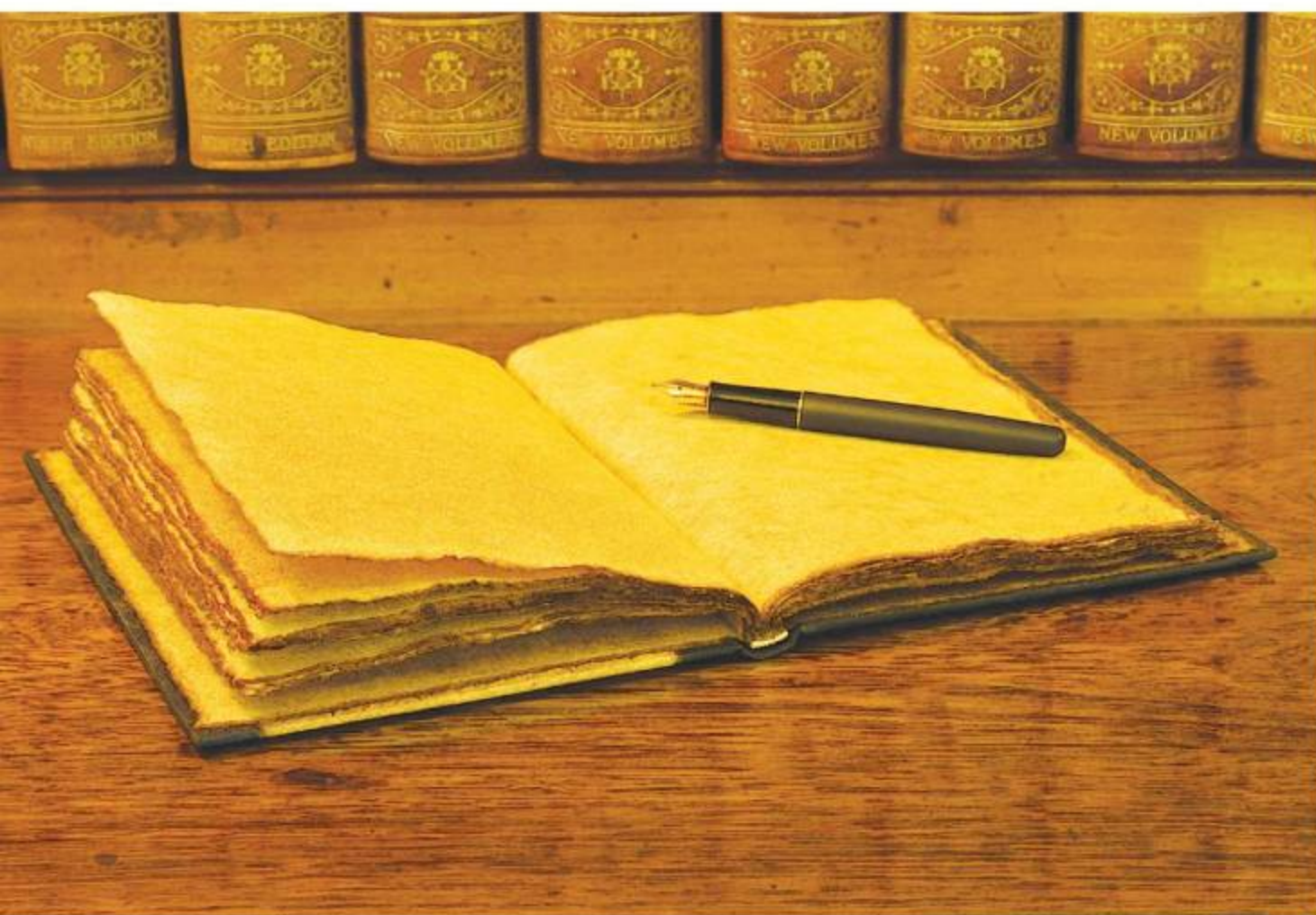
Joseph Dellanno is the founder of My Design/Build Project, a web communication application for design and build teams, and president of My Design/Build Coach, providing design/build business training. He is also president of Design Solutions Inc., a national design firm. Send e-mail to info@mydesignbuildproject.com. Read past columns at rdbmagazine.com.



the reader and listener. Both become emotionally involved with the author's story. As the reader dramatically acts out the last sentence the child quickly asks, "Can we read it again," proving the audience bought the story.

Do you look at your business as a magazine article, a short story or maybe a novel? Is each project like a chapter or a limerick? How many characters have you written about

hard time telling their own company's story? Typically people do not want to come across as pompous or self-promotional, desperately looking for more clients. To avoid this offensive behavior they tend to be shy and give the listener the short version of their company's services. The result is a dissatisfied listener who is not compelled to learn more. On the other hand, there are those who are not shy about





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NAHB welcomes regulation

You wouldn't think NAHB would want anything to do with regulation, but there's a green reason it does

By John D. Wagner

It would be an understatement to say that NAHB resists regulation. Just think how they fought residential sprinkler systems for so long.

But given who they are, who can blame NAHB for fighting regulations? They don't want their builder members to be required to comply with regulations if the cost of compliance can't be recovered. And that's the key to understanding NAHB: If the builder can't recover the money he puts into a project when complying with regulations, it eats directly into his bottom line, and that's the kind of regulation NAHB traditionally has fought.

Needless to say, more than a few heads were turned when NAHB started going so heavy into green a few years ago. In 2004, NAHB allowed the Model Green Home Building Guidelines to be issued, and it didn't seem so extraordinary. The guidelines were nonbinding, and NAHB got some good PR for its efforts.

But when the Model Green Home Building Guidelines morphed into the National Green Building Standard, NAHB was finally dabbling in potentially binding building regulation that might require builders to pay extra to comply with. Then, when NAHB started conversing with the ICC and the American National Standards Institute, it looked even more serious. Now, NAHB's National Green Building Standard, also known as ICC-700, has formally been approved by ANSI. With this approval, NAHB has allowed third-party certification of the building practices in its new green standard.

So, you have to ask yourself: Why the change of heart by the NAHB? Why would an organization that has so fiercely fought regulation suddenly act as though they've found green religion in a new building standard that



will cost builders money?

Part of the reason is that NAHB wants its own (very pro-builder) green standard to be the green standard for building new homes, instead of other potentially more onerous and costly standards that originate from other organizations, such as the federal government or the USGBC. (Since the LEED for Homes program — a.k.a. "LEED-H" — really isn't taking off, NAHB's efforts look all the more likely to define the de facto standard for green, single-family homes.)

But something more is going on here. NAHB has done a great job of vertically integrating its green brand. You can now be an NAHB Certified Green Professional, who builds homes certified by NAHB's green standard, which uses certified green products, scored by the NAHB Research Center. NAHB is essentially allowing builders to brand themselves and their homes as green using NAHB's own rules and institutions. Why? It may be out of the goodness of NAHB's heart, but it is also (and more likely) about the builder's bottom line.

By enabling builders to brand their homes as green, and to provide evidence of third-party green verification, the builder can recover

the premium he puts into his green projects ... hopefully at a profit, if he's shrewd about marketing his projects. In the end, NAHB looks great because they have been proactive in addressing green — which consumers like. Moreover, NAHB has provided a vehicle for its members to recover investments they make in green projects (third-party-verified homes), all the while driving realtors and buyers away from (finally!) the square-foot-pricing method of valuing homes that has done so much damage to our industry, as I pointed out in a recent column.

Today, 4,000 projects have been verified using the National Green Building Standard's online system. And no matter what NAHB's motives, I welcome the outcome: certified, green, high-performance homes. ■

John D. Wagner is an award-winning author of many books and articles about construction, and a frequent contributor to the industry's leading trade magazines. A sought-after speaker for industry events, he can be contacted at JohnDWagner.com. Read past columns at rdbmagazine.com.



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Photos: Mariko Reed, marikoreed.com

Oakland builder's plan for a sustainable family home evolves into one of the greenest homes in the country

By Rob Heselbarth, editor



The Margarido House, as it's known, is the only LEED Platinum home north of Monterey, Calif. It's also GreenPoint certified by BuildItGreen.org. A NanaWall folding door (seen in inset) expands living space to the backyard where access to the rooftop garden is gained via an outside staircase.

The only LEED Platinum home in California north of Monterey began as charred ruins from a 1991 Oakland Hills wildfire that destroyed 3,000 homes. A young builder believed the site would be perfect for the family home he had envisioned for years, so he purchased the property in the spring of 2006.

The reality of the builder's vision is the spectacular home you see on these and the following pages. It is certified LEED Platinum and is GreenPoint-rated. Both impressive accomplishments, made even more so considering the home is 4,700-sq. ft. in size.

Surprisingly, the builder's goal was not to create a LEED platinum home; it just evolved that way. Mike McDonald, president, McDonald Construction and Development in Oakland, Calif., says the plan was to incorporate as many green components as possible into the design of his family's home. "We wanted a green roof; we wanted a rainwater and groundwater cistern; we wanted passive and active solar elements; we wanted an efficient building envelope, an efficient HVAC system, and we wanted to use nontoxic, sustainable materials in the process," he explains.

As plans for the home began, the LEED for Homes program was in its pilot stage. McDonald



A roof garden is one of the many green features of this home in Oakland Hills, Calif. The garden is surrounded on two sides by a deck on which to relax and enjoy the unobstructed view of San Francisco Bay.

MCDONALD CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT

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PROJECT STATS

Location: Oakland Hills, Calif.
Size: 4,700 sq. ft.

EXTERIOR

Folding doors: NanaWall
Permeable pavers: Pavestone
Windows/Doors: Aluma Therm
Architectural steel: Chris French Metal
Siding: Western Red Cedar
Rainwater tank: Jensen Precast
Decking: TimberTech
Weatherproofing: Dupont Tyvek

BATH/KITCHEN

Appliances: Whirlpool, KitchenAid
Faucets: Hansgrohe
Sinks/Toilets: Toto
Bath hardware: Sonia
Ventilation: Fantech
Surfaces: Vetrazzo

INTERIOR

Fireplaces: Spark Modern Fire
Closets: California Closets

HOME TECHNOLOGY

Home control: Colorado vNet
Motorized shades: Lutron



Top: The living room space is separate but part of an open floor plan flexible enough to encourage conversation yet allow privacy as well.

Bottom: Concrete countertops and Energy Star Whirlpool appliances are just a few of the many products that make this home sustainable enough to earn both LEED Platinum and GreenPoint certification.

thought it would be great to have a third party hold his team accountable for what it was doing. "We certainly didn't think we would qualify for LEED Platinum," he recalls. "In fact, we started out negative 11 points on a 100-point scale due to the size of the home (4,700 sq. ft.). However, we began to get excited about what level of LEED certification we could meet, and it became a game of sorts."

Criticism of this green home's size is rare. "From a 'program' perspective, the home is the appropriate size. And from the client's perspective it's appropriate, and that will always rule the day. Clients are going to want what they want and what they can afford.

As a design and build community, we can take on the desire for larger homes as a challenge and look for innovative ways to make them more sustainable," McDonald says.

As stated, the project began 11 LEED points in the hole, a deficit overcome with innovation such as: using recycled materials; beating California's tough Title 24 energy efficiency requirements by 55 percent; creating educational opportunities throughout the project; using 99 percent

drought-tolerant landscaping; creating a hardscape that was 90 percent permeable; capturing and reusing all ground and rainwater; and utilizing advance framing and construction waste-reduction techniques.

Local excitement

The green nature of the project made it easier from the standpoint of limiting decisions on materials, but difficult from the standpoint of documentation of the green process and testing, McDonald says. "Ultimately, however, we created amazing partnerships with national material suppliers like Whirlpool, Western Red Cedar Lumber Association, and Lutron, plus dozens of local artisans and suppliers. They were attracted to it because the home was so sustainable, and we were trying for such a high certification level. Our partners found our excitement contagious."

McDonald believes the local community is a huge part of sustainability. It's important to support local businesses, buy locally and eat locally, he says. "Buying locally doesn't just build strong community, it also cuts down on the massive carbon footprint created from producing and shipping product from all over the world. Local suppliers, whom we now consider friends, essentially have their own keys to the project and are constantly bringing clients and colleagues to view the project and talk about their contribution and how the project inspired them" he says.

Ultimately, green did not seriously affect the home's cost. "We spent more on some of the active systems like solar PV and thermal solar, but in general green doesn't cost much more, especially with thoughtful design."

A list of the home's sustainable features can be found by visiting rdbmagazine.com/margarido.

Steep challenge

Construction began in fall of 2006 and the home was completed in June 2008. The city wanted to see a project that did not impact neighbors' views and that met current code. McDonald's brother Tim, of architectural firm Plumbob in Philadelphia, sunk his brother's home into the hillside, which pro-

tected neighbors' views, takes advantage of passive geothermal design and meets planning codes with respect to setbacks, heights and driveway approach. "I think ultimately that the neighbors and the city were inspired by what we were up to — our ideas for creating a highly designed home with high

Local suppliers

- Heath Ceramics – heathceramics.com
- Concreteworks – concreteworks.com
- Chris French Metal – cfrenchmetal.com

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1 Visit http://www.irs.gov/irb/2006-11_IRB/ar12.html for details.
2 Visit http://www.irs.gov/irb/2006-11_IRB/ar13.html for details.

For more info circle #18



Margarido House

The McDonald family home on Margarido Drive is also known, fittingly, as the Margarido House. More information can be found at **margaridohouse.com**.

levels of sustainability," he says.

The steep slope presented the initial challenge, but carving the home into the hillside was the blessing that really made the project sing, McDonald insists. "We looked at a variety of solutions including parking under the structure, parking in a bunkered garage at the street and then hoofing up 60 stairs. We ultimately settled on a hybrid of many solutions, carving the site and burying most of the first story into the hillside. This allowed elegant massing from the street's perspective, took advantage of passive geothermal cooling and heating, did not impact neighbors' views, and allowed for a nice and easy upslope driveway and parking pad at the first-floor level."

Good design

McDonald is quick to point out that good design contributed to the overall success of the project. For example, a home with an open floor plan and multiple indoor and outdoor spaces connected with disappearing doors like the NanaWall system in this house, can "live larger" than a bigger home that does not have these indoor and outdoor areas, he says. In addition, plenty of natural light can create a much larger-living home than one with smaller, low-light spaces, he explains.

The vision of a modern, sustainable family home had been in

Plenty of natural light throughout the Margarido House welcomes the residents and guests alike into spaces like the master bath.

McDonald's head for several years while he searched for the right lot. "When I found the lot, the design began to take place. I called in a number of friends and designers to assist with initial ideas. My good friend and architect Chris Parlette, for example, was instrumental in helping site the house. My brother Tim stepped in and quickly created a schematic design that was dead on. Ian Read, myself and our site superintendent took Plumbob's vision and with their dedicated assistance, created the home," he recalls.

The home is an almost exact duplicate of McDonald's original vision. Plumbob provided a macro set of plans detailed just enough for permitting. From that point, details were developed in a collaborative design/build manner. It is the design/build process that provided solutions to design challenges along the way.

Many changes in the home's details were managed on-site through design/build, so as construction proceeded it sometimes

was challenging to stay on the critical path, McDonald notes. Design/build facilitated such changes as the redesign of all windows and doors based on prevailing winds discovered during construction, and all finish carpentry details being developed toward the end of the project.

Opportunities like using Heath Ceramic recycled kiln trays for flooring and skins presented themselves, and the team was not married to a prior solution. "Artisans and vendors were encouraged, or more accurately, required to actively provide input into their parts of the project. Chris French Metal, for example, totally re-created all the railing, stair and architectural steel details; Concreteworks had latitude with countertops and other concrete surfaces; Wonderland Gardens had quite a blank slate with which to create the landscaping and green roof. I assert that for this reason the project is far more interesting than if it had been predesigned on paper," McDonald says.

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Sharing the success

The McDonald family home is many things; it is beautiful, it's large but also cozy, and it's perfect for parties. McDonald has always

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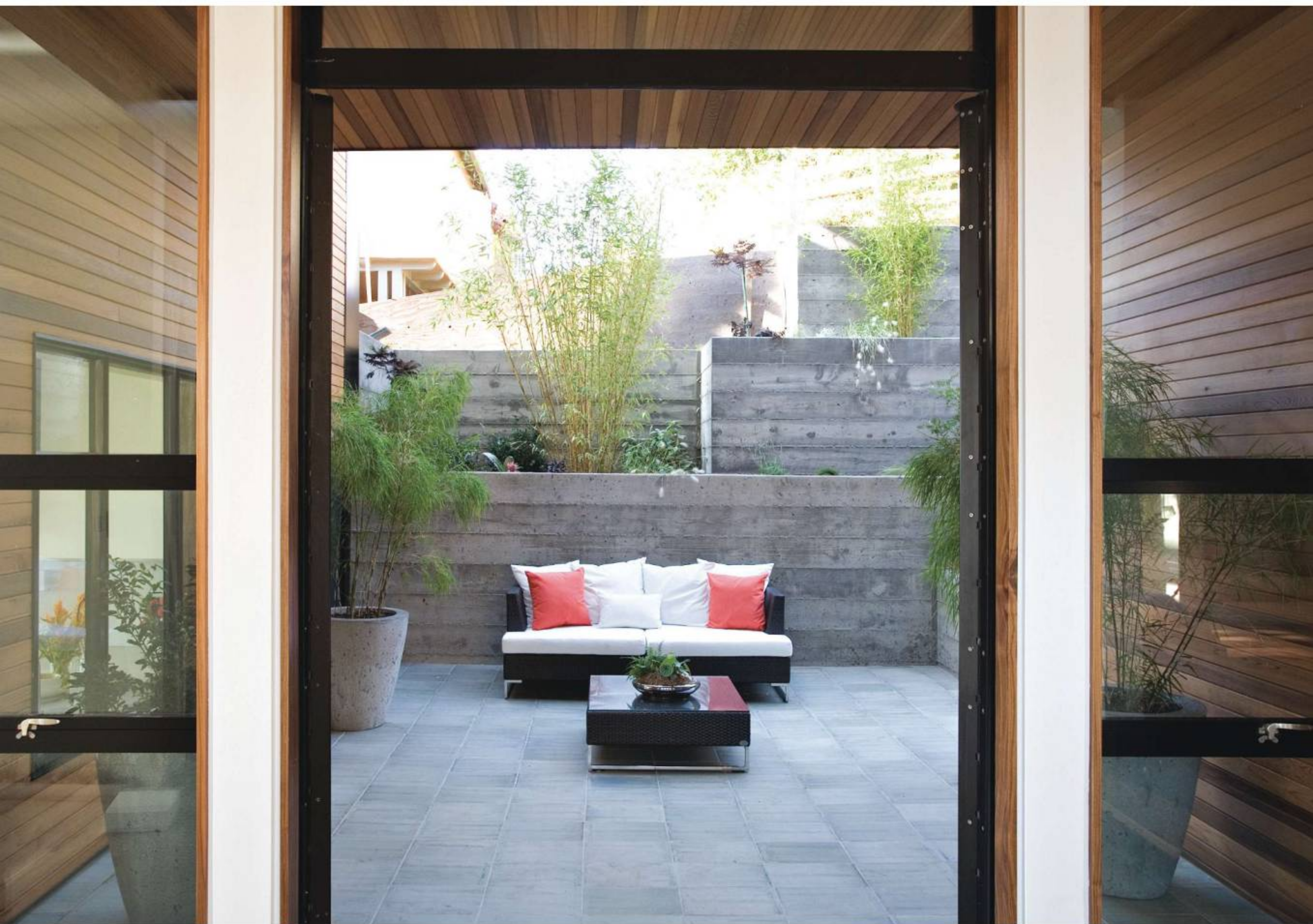
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The outdoor living space utilizes the hillside it's sunken into to create a surprisingly private area in which to relax and entertain.

been a bit of a promotional whiz, and loves to create partnerships and excitement. "I had no idea it would turn into the show home that it did. It really came out of all the collaborative partnerships we created. Once partners invested in the success of the home, they wanted to be around it more and show it off. It happened organically," McDonald says, referring to the many parties hosted at his home for more than 3,000 industry partners, colleagues and community leaders.

"Ultimately, I host these events to create inspiration and acknowledgement of what's possible in high design, high sustainability in a collaborative approach to design/build," he says. "For the most part they're

all connected to the built environment: members of the press, builders, architects, etc. It's not about the house; it's about the process of bringing like-minded people

together, getting inspired. They walk away believing anything's possible if you actually embrace collaboration and do what turns you on." ▮

In his own words; Mike McDonald's favorite green features

- How quiet the home is
- The green rooftop garden
- Beautiful, durable surfaces
- No off-gassing of nasty materials
- Recycled heath ceramic kiln trays reused as entry tile and wall skins
- The natural light that fills all rooms allowing minimal use of artificial lighting
- How comfortable the interior of the home feels on a cold windy day or a warm day
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Building the 2009 HGTV GREEN HOME



Green indoors and out

The front porch of the 2009 HGTV Green Home overlooks a large lake. A grass lawn with plenty of drought-tolerant plants surround the home. In the outdoor living space in the back yard, an outdoor four-poster daybed sits with a mattress covered in an all-weather outdoor fabric. Indoor/outdoor rugs have been bound to create area rugs and draperies hanging from all sides.

Across from the two patios is an island deck with a state-of-the-art grill that includes a griddle and preparation space. It is far enough away from seating areas to keep smoke to a minimum. For even more relaxation, an 18-ft.-long bocce ball court is included.

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For more information on
Building the 2009 HGTV
Green Home visit hgtvpro.com

This year's project is in Port St. Lucie, Fla., and is packed with many green features

The 2009 HGTV Green Home is in Port St. Lucie, Fla., and once again HGTVPro.com documented its construction. Following are some highlights of the construction process. For more information on Building the 2009 HGTV Green Home, visit hgtvpro.com.



To enter the 2009 HGTV Green Home giveaway, please visit hgtv.com/greenhome.

The Spanish-style HGTV Green Home was custom-built yet designed to complement other properties in the neighborhood.

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A solid ICF foundation

The 2009 HGTV Green Home's foundation is constructed of insulated concrete forms. The builder, Leon Camarda, LEED AP, project manager at Core Communities, Port St. Lucie, Fla., used a Styrofoam product that accepts concrete in the core and provides an amazing R value to the home. "We looked at all the different products available and ICF for a green home is probably the best you can get," he says.

Corners and straight pieces are put together almost like Legos, says Antonio Toro of Fortified Structures Group in Longwood, Fla. "They stack with a running bond like a brick. It has ties in the middle that hold it in place. They act like a skeleton that hold the sides together. It serves as a form material while we're pouring these walls," he explains.

The result is solid poured concrete walls. Once the braces are removed, the insulation stays in place. "Everything is supported by these walls," Toro says. "They are structural concrete beams and columns that are going to be supporting the majority of

loads, so that's where we're going to get more freedom for the interior design." ICFs stand up well to hurricanes, fires and tornados, but also are used for energy savings.

In addition to the R value, durability is another benefit of using ICFs, Camarda says. "The walls are essentially 6 in. of solid concrete, reinforced, so you get a very durable, solid home that also has a very tight envelope, which is going to help with any air leakage and help to save on your electric bill," he adds.

Drywall will be applied directly to the ICFs. Electricians will carve out a notch for wiring and another notch for his boxes which can be fastened directly to the concrete, he notes.

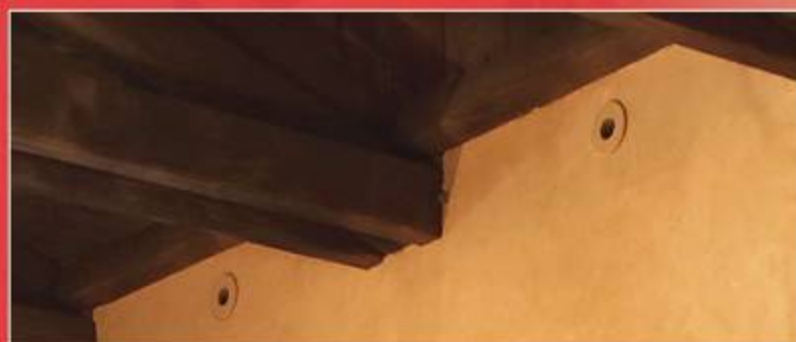
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build, it rained. Because this is a dynamic process, Green Home Planner Jack Thomasson and company make decisions on a daily basis that can alter the form or function of parts of the house.

Inside the home

Upon entering the 2009 HGTV Green Home, visitors find themselves in a welcoming, enclosed foyer. To the left is an extension of the living room with orange chaises. A storage wall contains two mini refrigerators in espresso-colored cabinetry. Kitchen cabinets are espresso with dark composite Caesarstone countertops and stainless steel Kenmore appliances. The dining room looks out to the patios. The walls are Sherwin-Williams Accessible Beige.

For more information on Building the 2009 HGTV Green Home, please visit hgtvpro.com.

Top features of the 2009 HGTV Green Home

The following eco-friendly features were the largest contributing factors to the Platinum LEED Certification of the 2009 HGTV Green Home.

1. Solar energy panels; 2. ICF walls, spray foam insulation, sealed envelope; 3. Solar hot water; 4. Low-E windows; 5. Metal roof; 6. High-efficiency air conditioning.

Indoor air quality, A/C filtration, energy recovery ventilators and contaminant control (i.e. detached garage) also contributed, as did the landscaping that incorporates drought-tolerant plants and high-efficiency irrigation. ▶



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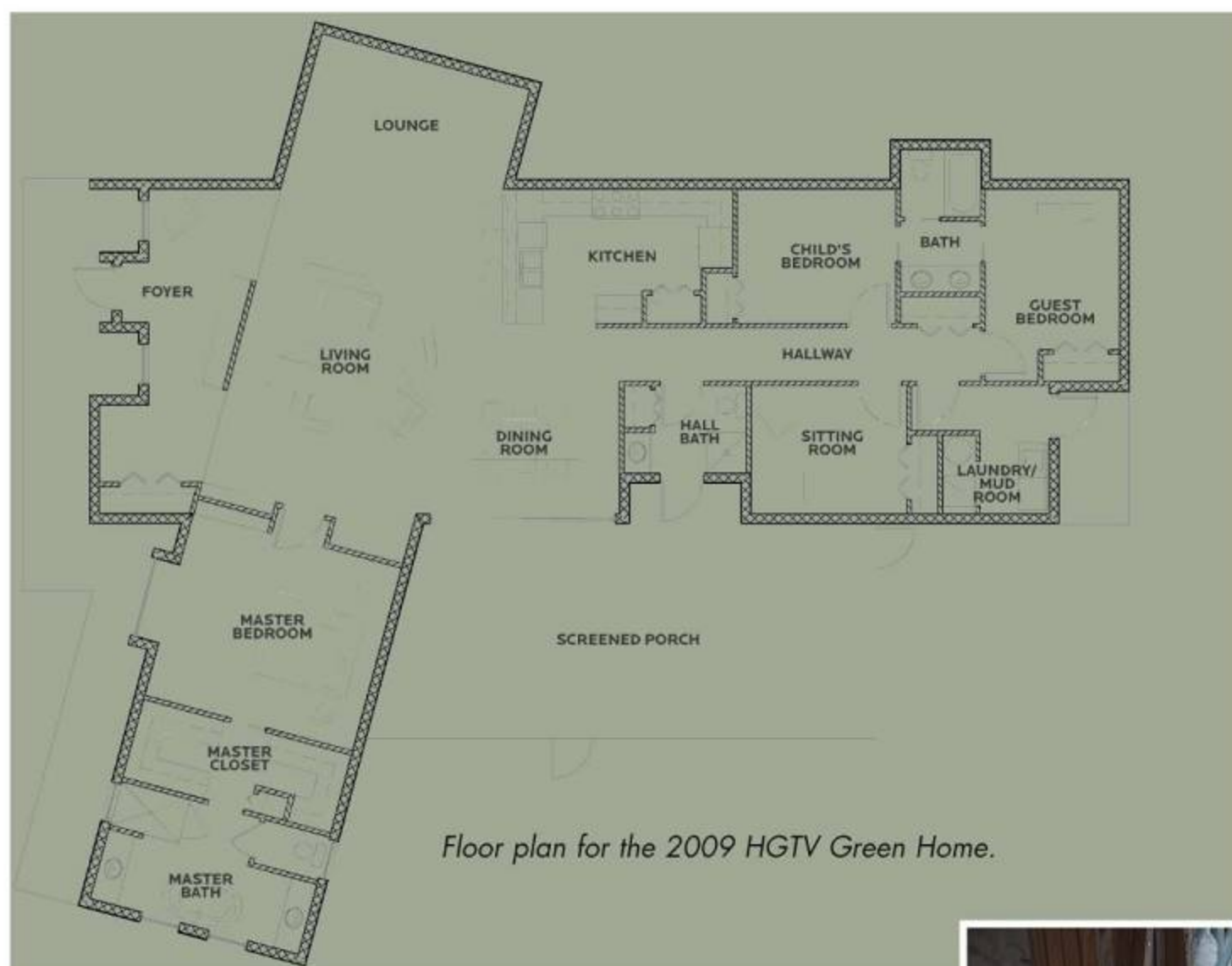
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For more info circle #23



Floor plan for the 2009 HGTV Green Home.

HGTV Green Home team

Jack Thomasson, house planner
Linda Woodrum, interior designer
Leon Camarda, builder
Michael Carlson, architect
Brian Snell, structural engineer
Wes McCurry, developer
Bill Stewart, mechanical and electrical engineer

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For more information on
 Building the 2009 HGTV
 Green Home visit hgtvpro.com

Spray-foam insulation

A view looking up into the clerestory (at right) shows spray-foam insulation with an R-30 rating in the ceiling and an R-19 rating in the walls. Spray-foam insulation creates a barrier that prevents drafts from creeping into interior spaces during the winter months and prevents heat from entering the home during summer months.



Maximizing roof space

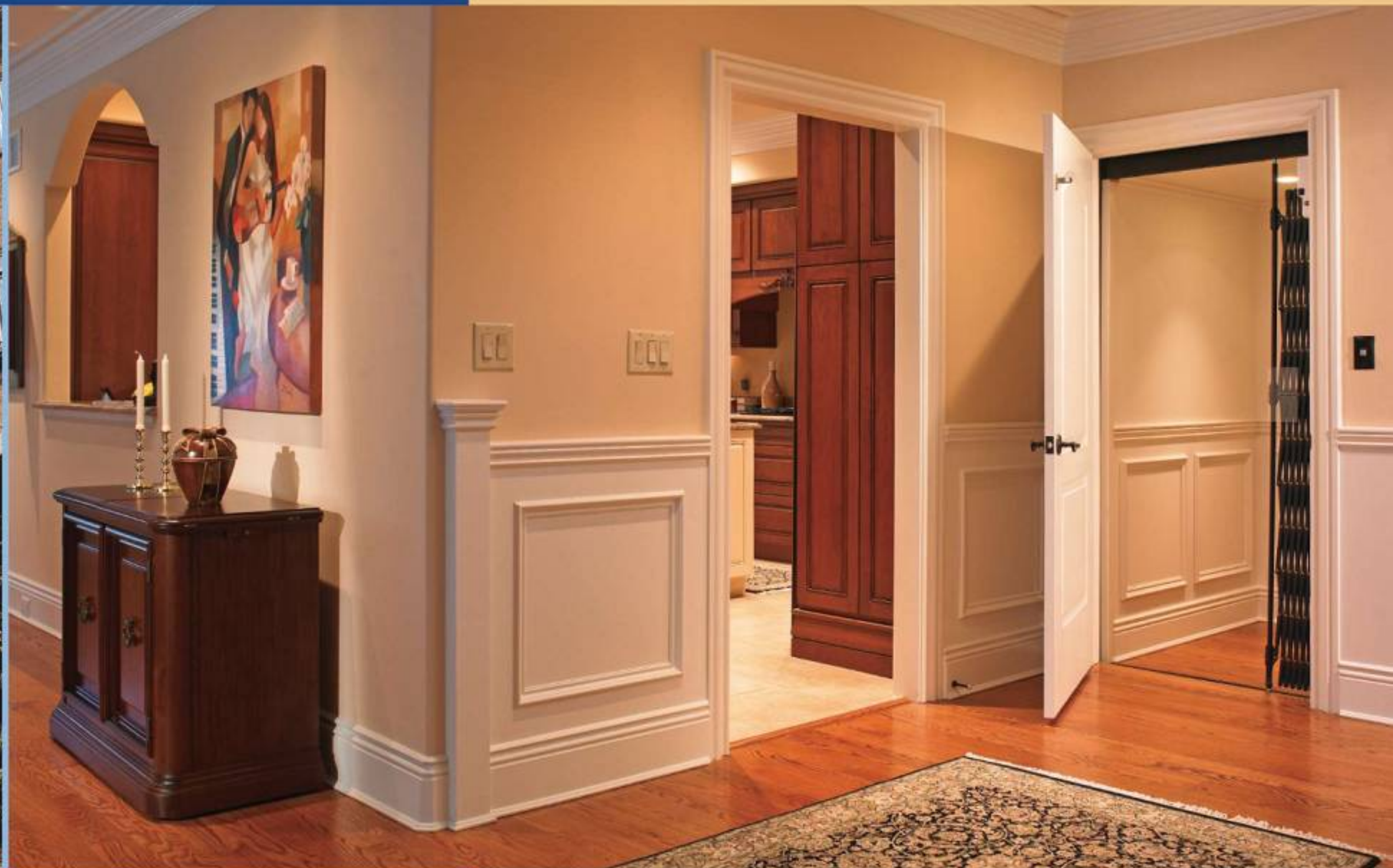
Not only does the roof of the 2009 HGTV Green Home feature a deck area for relaxing, but it also contains a garden (left). Pat Hogan of Legacy Contracting Solutions, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., reviews the installation process for builders interested in incorporating a rooftop garden into future projects.

"Your first consideration is going to be waterproofing," Hogan notes. "We started with a concrete patio deck, which is also maybe a little bit different than a normal deck situation. Prep the concrete then start with a rubber roofing membrane. In this case we chose American Hydrotech, which is a rubberized asphalt membrane. It's heated up to an almost liquid, viscous form and then spread out." When the membrane hardens it forms a tough skin.

Pavers are placed directly on top of the membrane, Hogan explains. At the very bottom of the planting area, a drain is placed with a component designed to both retain and drain water. A filter material keeps soil from not getting into the drain system. The growing soil for the rooftop garden is lighter than traditional soil. Once the soil is put in place, landscaping can begin.

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Harvesting wind power

Specifying and installing a small wind turbine for your next custom home is about as simple as you might think it is

By Rob Heselbarth, editor

Most of us know wind turbines generate power, and can do so in residential applications. But architects and builders need to know more: What types of homes are best suited for wind turbines; is a particular home site good for a small wind turbine; where should the turbine be positioned in relationship to the house?

These and other questions are answered for readers of *Residential Design & Build* by Ron Stimmel, small wind advocate for the American Wind Energy Association. But first, Stimmel reviews a few basic facts about small wind turbine operation to establish a baseline of knowledge.

Wind turbines are simple and elegant in their design, Stimmel says, with only two or three moving parts. They operate by the concept of lift and drag. "The wind turns the rotors through the process of lift and drag, which spins a magnet across a coiled copper wire, which produces current. That gets

adjusted into electricity that can be used by appliances," he explains.

Turbine positioning

For location of a small wind turbine, the more open space the better so the turbine can meet setback and permitting requirements and not conflict with public right of ways. Open space is important because it produces better wind quality. "And the height of the turbine is critical, too. The rule of thumb is at least 30 ft. higher than any obstacles within a 500-ft. radius of it. You need height to reach better wind because there is friction between wind

Specifying wind turbines can be simple. First, determine if it will power the home in part or whole. Next, choose a spot on-site away from obstructions.



and the surface of the Earth," Stimmel says.

"As long as you have a tower that reaches above the house, it doesn't matter where you place the turbine. And if half the house is covered by trees, then that will affect turbine placement on the property," he adds.

Distance from the house is another factor to consider. The actual connection of the turbine to the electrical system is not a huge factor for architects and builders to consider, but it's important to remember that copper wire is expensive; the farther away the turbine is from a house, the more costly the turbine will become, Stimmel explains.

"Soil conditions play a factor as well," he continues. "If half the property is swampy or gravelly, that would be something to consider. Access to quality wind is the first priority. Then comes making sure you meet setback and zoning requirements."

When considering turbine location relative to a home's footprint, the decision is a personal one. The homeowner must decide whether viewing the turbine from inside the house is important or not. "I would want to watch my turbine go around while pumping clean energy into my home. I'd want to see it. Others might not," Stimmel continues.

Built environments are not ideal for wind turbine placement because wind behaves differently around obstacles in a built environment. "It baffles turbines and causes wear and tear," Stimmel says. Small wind turbines are sold in all 50 states. Wind resource quality can vary within a state, or within a region, so specification of turbines is done on a micro-siting basis, he adds.

Wind resource maps are available publicly through the U.S. Department of Energy, or a quick Google search will produce results as well. "Generally, if neighbors near a home site can tell a good story about how windy it is all the time, or complain constantly about it, or if you can fly a kite above the house, your site is a good candidate for a small wind turbine. Or, you can contact a local dealer installer trained in site assessment," Stimmel says.

Myths and fears

The AWEA includes a section in its zoning guidebook called *Red Herrings and Non-*



Economic stimulus legislation passed in recent months provides financial incentives for small wind turbines that never existed. Up to 30 percent of installation costs can be covered.

Issues to dispel myths and rumors floating around about wind turbines. One myth is that turbines kill birds. "There is no study that says small turbines are harmful to birds. The bird issue is raised a lot because the first wind farm in the 1980s was located in a migratory pattern. They fixed that problem years ago, and it has haunted the perception of wind power since then. In addition, when looking at the environmental impact of wind turbines, you'll see that no water is consumed, land use is small and they create no emissions. Negative impacts are overblown," Stimmel says.

Another myth centers around excessive noise. At operating speeds, Stimmel says, a turbine can emit some white noise like a whooshing sound, but is masked by the sound of the wind itself. "Some people raise this issue as a way to scare off wind farm developments," he notes.

The cost of wind power

For residential sites, a small wind power turbine can cost roughly from \$10,000 to \$60,000 for one large enough to power the entire house. The price range reflects the different sizes available; a \$10,000 model can power 20 to 60 percent of a home, while a \$60,000 turbine provides more power for systems such as air conditioning and heating. "More cost equals more power, and power is proportional to turbine size," Stimmel says.

Cost for a wind turbine might not end when it's purchased and installed. Any energy savings gained by use of a wind turbine can be

lost to an inefficient house. "The more efficient you can build your house, the less expensive a turbine will become."

The number of tax credits relating to energy efficiency in general has erupted lately. The small wind turbine market has been without federal incentives since 1985 until the stimulus bill was passed in October 2008, Stimmel says. "That [stimulus bill] introduced a first-ever investment tax credit for small wind systems of 100 kW and less that covers 30 percent of total installed cost. Then, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act passed in February 2009 removed caps and lead to huge growth potential for small wind turbines. It's a one-time credit, but any sale within eight years from February 2009 qualifies," Stimmel says.

In addition, a patchwork of incentives is available through federal grant programs, and states might offer loans, rebates or tax credits for those who buy turbines, he continues. "It can add up to a generous incentive," Stimmel says, "and you can use federal incentives on top of state incentives." ■

WIND TURBINE RESOURCES

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Grace under counter

The common-sense design of under-counter appliances make them more popular than ever

By Jon Minnick

Under-counter appliances can be found in an even mix of high-end new construction and remodeling projects. They give kitchen designers a larger range of placement options and give homeowners a greater array of convenience. The types of under-counter appliances now include refrigeration/freezing, microwave cooking, warming and dishwashing and provide greater lifestyle flexibility in the home.

“think when homeowners started wanting to store their own wine collections, it sparked a lot of under-counter appliance innovations,” says Chaya Chang, marketing manager, residential and hospitality products, Perlick Corp. “As homeowners asked for wine reserves, builders then looked at other ways to save room in the kitchen and create additional counter space by placing everything under-counter.”

Some common finishes exist in the under-counter appliance market. Stainless steel is the most popular. What once was a trend in high-end appliances has now become a classic look. Almost all under-counter appliances are available in a stainless steel option. The second common finish is wood overlay. This is a popular option for kitchen designers and homeowners who don't want to see their appliances, but would rather have them blend in with the look of their cabinetry. Most manufacturers will supply a template or dimensions that can be taken to

a cabinetmaker to build the wood overlay. If neither of these choices fits a home's decor, manufacturers typically offer black and white color options.

Under-counter cooling

The circle of life for under-counter appliances begins with keeping things cold. Perlick specializes in under-counter cooling appliances from freezers and refrigerators to beverage centers and wine reserves. Perlick prides itself on some innovations such as stainless steel interiors, variable-speed compressors, full-extension shelving and RapidCool technology.

“RapidCool is similar to convection cooking, where we're forcing air into the refrig-

erator to keep the same temperature from top to bottom, front to back,” Chang explains. “We have a fan on the top of the unit and an intake on the bottom that's constantly forcing air through it to keep a consistent temperature. This is different from most refrigeration units that use cold plate technology to move coolant through a panel of coils in the back of the refrigerator, keeping it cool in the back of the unit and warm in the front.”

A key difference exists between refrigerator, beverage and wine drawers. One misnomer about beverage and wine centers is thinking they are refrigerators. Only refrigerators designed to reach temperatures in the 30s to keep food from spoiling are UL-approved for food storage. On the other



Beverage coolers do not get cold enough to safely store food. Refrigerator drawers like this one from Fisher & Paykel, on the other hand, are designed to keep food near 30 degrees F.

hand, beverage centers maintain a temperature range in the 40s which is UL-approved only for sealed beverages, but not for food storage. Wine reserves have a temperature range usually from 40 to 65 degrees F to keep wine at its ideal temperatures.

Manufacturers are accommodating homeowners' desires to live in smaller spaces such as luxury apartments and condos with under-counter appliances. Some under-counter refrigerators can provide up to 12 cu. ft. of storage space.

"I don't think under-counter refrigeration will replace traditional units, but I think it gives designers and homeowners an option for different looks," Chang adds. "Under-counter appliances are point-of-use products that can be put anywhere they are needed, and not just in the kitchen."

Cooking drawers

Manufacturers don't expect under-counter appliances to replace traditional stand-alone models, with the exception of microwave drawers. Sharp introduced its next generation of microwave drawers with a new 1.2-cu.-ft. capacity that has an increased cavity height. This allows for taller dishes and includes sensor technology that is programmed to cook food to the correct length of time and wattage based on the particular food in the drawer.



Under-counter wine centers like this one from Perlick Corp. are perfect for media rooms or other areas where space is limited.



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For more info circle #16

"One of the reasons we introduced the microwave drawers is because we were getting so much input from the kitchen design community," says Christine Lewis, associate vice president of marketing, Sharp Appliances. "What's happening in kitchen trends today is the elimination of walls, putting in windows and basically hiding everything else. So a microwave drawer lets you take it off of the counter and not have to be placed over a range, because kitchen designers don't like the in-your-face design of a microwave."

What makes the microwave drawer different is its design — placed at the most convenient working level which is waist high. This eliminates the need for a homeowner to open the microwave, remove the food to stir it and then replace it for further cooking. It becomes especially helpful with the aging population, and for those with physical limitations, who find it more difficult to do anything over waist high.



Microwave drawers such as this one from Sharp save counter space and, some believe, are less of an eyesore than traditional under-cabinet models.

"I honestly believe that one day microwave drawers will overtake stand-alone models," Lewis says. "I think the only thing that is slowing down a rapid conversion is a slowdown in remodels and new construction."

Warming drawers

Warming drawers probably are the most misunderstood under-counter appliance. What they're used for or just how helpful they can be doesn't always resonate.

"I think most people look at warming drawers and simply think it's just a way to keep food warm for a party, or a family on-the-go keeping food warm for someone getting home later," says John Anderson, senior product development manager for built-in ovens and warming drawers,



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Whirlpool Corp. "The uses they probably overlook are to proof bread, the plate warming function and for the KitchenAid brand, the slow-cooking option."

The internal temperature of most warming drawers will range from a low of 80 to a high of 220 degrees F. KitchenAid currently makes a model that warms to a high of 250 degrees F producing the slow-cook feature. The low end of the warming drawer's temperature range would mainly be used in proofing bread, while the middle range, between 140 and 150 degrees F, is where food and plates are kept warm.

In general, warming drawers are better suited for foods with higher moisture content because warming drawers' nature is to take moisture out of food. If you leave food in for an extended period of time, you run the risk of food drying out. For this reason some people put a small bowl of water in the drawer with the food to try and maintain moisture levels.

Warming drawers typically are installed beneath a built-in oven, so it's usually not a separate under-counter installation. A variation on this column approach would include a built-in microwave, followed by a built-in oven and then a warming drawer. As design changes, warming drawers are showing up off to the side of cooking zones, especially in 24-in. widths that can fit into a normal cabinet space.

"Although we see warming drawers installed in both new construction and remodeling projects, they are predominately installed in new construction due to the fact that most remodels don't have the room or don't account for a warming drawer," Anderson adds.

Dishwashing drawers

Under-counter appliances not only store and cook food, but are helping with clean-up as well. Dishwashers traditionally are under-counter appliances, but it's the onset of dishwasher drawers that is making waves in the kitchen.

Manufacturers offer either single- or double-drawer options, where the double drawer fits the cavity traditionally set aside for a tub dishwasher. The beauty in using dish drawers over traditional models is the convenience, savings and incorporation into the surrounding kitchen.

"Builders really enjoy the ability to take two single drawers, split them up, put them on both sides of a sink and raise

them up off of the ground," explains Brian May, program manager, premium brand dishwashers, Whirlpool Corp. "That keeps customers from having to bend way down to get dishes in and out of the dishwasher. Additionally we are finding people who will purchase single drawers to put in a bar area, or downstairs in an entertainment area to manage light loads and glassware."

Smaller families and those whose children have moved out are processing dishes only for a single meal. Dishwasher drawers allow these families to load one drawer and start washing it while the other drawer remains clean, instead of having to wait two to three days to gather a complete load of dirty dishes to wash.

They also save energy and money by not running half loads of dishes.

"We currently don't tie into home technology systems, but I think there are a lot of companies looking into that," May says. "In terms of smartness we have sensor technology that performs a lot of calculations and analysis on soil levels. When the customer pushes a button, it will measure the soil level coming off of the dishes and the cycle is going to adjust to accommodate that."

In terms of capacity, there is some loss with drawers, with the average drawer holding five place settings each for a total of 10 place settings in a double drawer system, and a tub holding 12 to 14 place settings. Although the base rack is fixed with Whirlpool's dishwasher drawers, they have cup shelves, stemware holders and rows that fold down or up to accommodate a homeowner's lifestyle. ▀



The invention of the dishwasher drawer, such as this one from Fisher & Paykel, has revolutionized kitchen cleanup. These smaller appliances save space and energy, running smaller loads as needed.

Accessories for the bathroom

Careful planning early in the design process can result in a coordinated, functional and beautiful bathroom

By Susan Jacobs, CKD, CBD, CAPS

When designing a bathroom, always consider client lifestyle. Think about grooming habits, bathroom size, room style, i.e., traditional, contemporary, rustic or cottage style. Will the bathroom be for daily maintenance or used as a place of retreat? And what about accessories that make it personal? Those are the icing on the cake.

Bathroom accessories are available in a myriad of options, from specialty hand showers to matching components to fixtures and faucets, towel warmers, specialty mirror frames, mirrored medicine cabinets, matching lighting fixtures and specialty shelving. All of these products add aesthetic beauty to the room, while enhancing functionality.

Bathroom safety

Another consideration when planning the bathroom is safety. Many products designed to meet ADA specifications have also been styled with great care. Grab bars are now offered in a variety of popular finishes and specific styling to meet any bathroom style. Shower seats now move away from the clinical institutional designs to the beautiful built-in tile, granite or solid surface materials designed as corner seating or bench-style seating. The size and design can be custom fit to an individual's needs. Wooden seats can be quite comfortable, as well as functional, yet stand up to everyday use. A wooden shower floor insert extends comfort to the feet while allowing for proper drainage.

Coordination of bathroom accessories is essential to successful bathroom design; mirrors can play critical roles.

Designer hand grips that affix to the side of the tub by a strong suction system are ideal for assistance getting in and out of the tub/shower. Some hand-held showerheads by Alsons are designed to be used as safety grab bars as well. Moen's Securemount grab bar systems allow for easy grab bar installation not involving studs. Utilizing the principles of physics, its D-shape anchor is precision engineered for optimal bracing behind the wall. This design offers flexibility so the decorative bar may be placed to meet an individual's need.

Whatever type of grab bar is used, follow National Kitchen and Bath Association planning guidelines to ensure proper placement. Grab bars in the tub/shower area should be placed at least 33 to 36-in. above the floor and must be 1 1/4 to 2 in. in diameter and extend 1 1/2 in. from the wall. Grab bars should be at least 24 in. in length and support a minimum of 250 lbs. of pressure. And be sure to design proper wall structure in early planning stages to support grab bars that mount through the wall.

Including a client's personal tastes, and sometimes personal items, is necessary to ensure the bathroom reflects client tastes and lifestyle.



Proper planning

Bathroom accessory planning needs to begin at the onset of room design. By planning early, a decisive design can be created without looking mismatched or making the room appear cluttered. Begin by asking clients to select their favorite products to understand their tastes, wants and needs. As design progresses, a complete package of products, placement, functionality and aesthetics develops into a vision from which the bathroom, with all its amenities, becomes a reality.

The most popular and common practice used in the bath is matching hardware to the fixtures such as toilets, tubs and faucets. Many manufacturers have designed complete collections to ensure coordination. Accessories range from single, double and triple towel bars, robe hooks, valet hangers, tooth brush holders and soap dishes. Toilet tissue holders are available to match by using the standard spring form, pivot style or open-ended, vertical or floor-stand options. Pivoting mirrors, cabinet hardware, lighting sconces and shelving have also been added to the collections. Many options in styles and finishes are available, including some "out of the box" designs such as a jewelry collection by Edgar Berebi.

For bathroom retreats, heated towel bars are wonderful additions. Once again, optional finishes and specialty styling are available. This is one product that definitely needs to be considered at the onset of the design. If a heated floor is in the plan, a hydronic towel warmer can be connected to that system with 3/4-in. copper compression valves. Should an electric towel warmer be preferred, the electrical contractor will need to be advised of the placement to ensure a 120-volt line is available. The Myson line carries a nice selection of contemporary and traditional warmers in several sizes, including the smallest model as a shelf for rolled towels.

Mirrors, mirrors on the wall

Mirrors come in all shapes and sizes: full-wall, floor-length for dressing areas, oval-shaped vanity mirrors that tilt up and down, or free-standing magnifying mirrors. Mirrors placed around large tubs will seem-

ingly increase the size of the room, and add ambiance at the same time. Decorative mirror framing is a great way to add to the charm of the bathroom and is one more way to pull a room's theme together. Moen offers a product called Mirrorscapes that transforms a plain, plate-glass mirror into an absolute vision with an innovative framing system which gives the appearance of a custom-made frame. Mirrorscapes is available in a variety of metallic and wood finishes coordinating with faucets and cabinetry.

The Kohler Co. and Roborn offer unique mirror/medicine cabinet combinations. These cabinets can be ganged or stacked to create customized sizes. Side reflection lighting is available, as well as integrated night lighting which casts a subtle blue light from the bottom of the cabinet. For that bath retreat, how about adding their cold-storage mirrored cabinet? The M Series offers discreet sophistication along with the ability to keep items chilled. Those organic-natural cosmetics, special medications which need refrigeration or that special bottle of champagne for those relaxing moments, can be stored at different temperatures to meet a product's recommended storage temperatures. Electrical outlets are provided as well.

Tub, shower space

Adding shower space to a standard tub/shower or the nostalgic claw-foot tub is as simple as using a curved shower curtain rod; it adds needed elbow room. They typically are available in the three popular finishes of chrome, brushed nickel and old-world bronze, and fit showers between 54 and 72 in. in length.

One product not typically thought of as an accessory is a hand-held shower. Hansgrohe offers a unique ensemble called Axor Starck X. It is a shower faucet that includes a waterfall showerhead and



Lighting is another critical component of good bathroom design and must be coordinated with the room's style.

a hand wand system with clean lines and a flat appearance that make it almost blend into the wall. The effect is reinforced with shower controls and shelves that are tucked neatly into the side of the panel away from view. With complementary accessories and superb functionality, it allows one to create a bathroom in the true sense of contemporary.

Regardless of the design theme, consistency and simplicity are the keys to beautiful results. Adding too many items will take away from the beauty of the products and the room design itself. A simple corner unit with a soothing portable waterfall and some coordinating candles around a tub deck may be just the key to the smaller bathroom retreat; while on a larger scale, many of these items will find their place within a well-planned-out design. Accessories should enhance the design, not take away from what should be a private grooming oasis.

Susan Jacobs, CKD, CBD, CAPS, has worked in the design industry and been an NKBA member since 1987. Starting her career as director of sales and design for a custom cabinet company in Michigan, she now works at Pumco Interiors Kitchen and Bath in Petoskey, Mich. Jacobs has held a board of directors position for the Northern Michigan Chapter of NKBA since 2001, and has served on the national level for the certification subcommittee. Jacobs also is a National Educational Instructor for NKBA. ▀



Atlas Homewares' new spring line of decorative hardware includes the Canterbury Collection of knobs and pulls for adding a splash of color to cabinets. The new line features rich colors and clear enamel and is available in black and red, or classic black and white. For more info circle #64



The Wi-Touch wireless remote control unit from **Toto USA** allows users to operate a faucet without using hands. The unit can be installed with any standard manual faucet, with or without pullout sprays. Wi-Touch can be placed anywhere within a radius of three feet from the control box – at foot, knee, or elbow levels. For more info circle #65



The WHER collection from **Sonoma Forge** features a faucet with independent control handles that can be placed in any location. Both handles can be placed to one side of a sink or on each side. It is available in Sans Hands handsfree as well. The collection includes a bud vase, shower drain, robe hook, towel ring, towel bar, toilet tissue holder, drains and soap dish. For more info circle #66



The Classic Contemporary Collection from **Watermark** includes eleven handle designs for a daring and design savvy combination designed to inspire. The CC11 handle, with its bold, yet intricate geometric shapes was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. Combining the spout and handle creates a design loaded with historical significance reminiscent of one of America's most prolific architects. For more info circle #67



The Kent collection from **Xylem** has a transitional design to fit neatly with both traditional and modern spaces. Two rich finishes, brown ebony and whitewash are available. Pair the units with contemporary finishes and surfaces such as porcelain tile, or go more classic and shabby chic with rustic wide-plank wood and stone floors. For more info circle #68



This five-inch-square, chrome-finished Short Shelf is one of 10 components in the new Axor Starck ShowerCollection, created for **Hansgrohe's** Axor designer brand by the French master designer Philippe Starck. The collection offers a designer- and installer-friendly, building-block system for creating a shower from individual elements that can be freely combined. For more info circle #69



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For more info circle #70

Uplift cabinets from **Robern** feature a door that opens vertically, offering the aesthetics of a seamless mirror and flexible storage and design options. The sleek mirrored door opens upward, allowing a mirror span up to four feet wide. An aluminum handle enables effortless two-finger lifting of the door to avoid smudging.

For more info circle #91



The Avalon vanity from **Vanity Flair** is loaded with storage options and made from Plyboo for environmentally conscious consumers. Drawers are designed to be roomy and the medicine cabinet features a soft-closing pop-up door and is also semi-recessed. Plyboo is made from 100 percent bamboo.

For more info circle #92



BATH ACCESSORY RESOURCES

Alsons Corp.
For more info circle #93

DrawerVac
For more info circle #94

Emtek Products
For more info circle #95

Kohler Co.
For more info circle #96

Myson Inc.
For more info circle #97

Panasonic Inc.
For more info circle #98

Quick Drain
For more info circle #99

R. Christensen Hardware
For more info circle #100

Runtal North America
For more info circle 101

Top Knobs
For more info circle #102

MGS has developed a stylized collection of fixtures and accessories for the bath, such as this hook, that are simple in design, sophisticated in style and highly functional. The accessories are created from 100 percent solid stainless steel. After fabrication, polishers hand finish each part to a shine or soft luster of natural brushed stainless steel.
For more info circle #103



The Vision collection from **Cool Lines USA** includes a solid stainless steel robe/towel hook and bar that complement a complete line of accessories. The hook and bar are available in polished and satin stainless.

For more info circle #104



Sonia's S3 collection features a new generation of accessories including this toothbrush holder designed to be rich in pure form and simple volumes. The collection's rectangular shapes in bent brass bar stock bring a mix of modernity and simplicity to today's contemporary bath suite. Each series includes towel bars, toilet paper holders, robe hooks, shelves and double towel bars.

For more info circle #105



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Sharp Solar's OnEnergy solar system uses UL-listed integrated grounding designed to make system installation simpler and more cost-effective. It eliminates the need for connecting a ground wire from module to module throughout the entire array, reducing the most labor-intensive aspects of installing a solar photovoltaic system.

For more info circle #107



FusionSolar from Custom-Bilt Metals is a turn-key rooftop solar power system integrated into a standing seam roof. All components, detailed schematics and specifications for wiring and electrical components are provided. Sheet metal and roofing professionals are able to install the standing seam roof as they would a standard metal roof.

For more info circle #108



The Eagle Solar Roof with SolarBlend from Suntech is an integrated photovoltaic roofing solution. The solar roofing tiles are available in three colors (gray, brown and terracotta) and install with Eagle's concrete roof tile to create a roof that protects while creating energy.

For more info circle #109



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For more info circle #111

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SolarMagic power optimizers are designed to dramatically improve the performance of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems impaired by real-world conditions. Built upon analog power management circuits, the power optimizers give back much of the power PV systems can lose to partial shade, panel aging and irregular array designs.

For more info circle #112



The Sunny Boy line of inverters from **SMA America** turn direct-current power generated by solar panels into usable household current. They are designed for residential and light commercial use. The newest models are certified to the UL 1741/IEEE 1547 standard, and have efficiencies ranging from 95 to 96 percent.

For more info circle #114



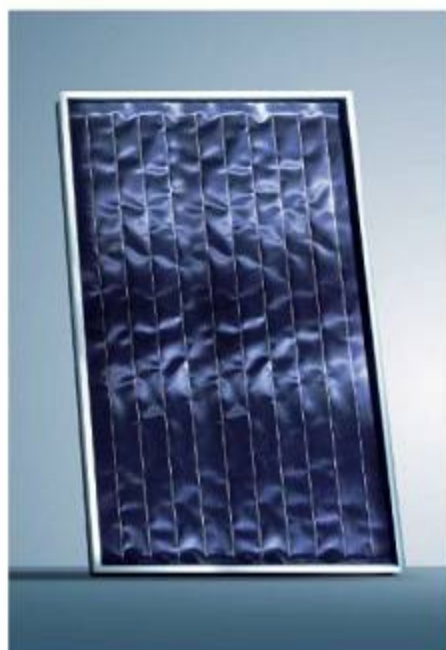
The Solar Star Conversion Kit from **SolaTube** is designed to boost the performance of existing passive attic vents and transform noisy- and energy-consuming vents into quiet and highly efficient solar-powered rooftop ventilators. The attic fan and Conversion Kit are designed with a leak-proof and high impact-resistant design.

For more info circle #115

Vaillant solar flat plate collectors absorb sunlight and efficiently convert the radiation into hot water.

The solar collectors work with existing water heaters to allow customers to have hot water, day and night. A screw-free frame presents a clean and polished aesthetic, and fewer connectors reduces possible energy loss.

For more info circle #113



SolarWorld provides complete solar electric systems under the brand name Sunkits for any kind of sloped roof. The mounting kit consists of modules, an inverter that has been specifically chosen for the selected module type, and the mounting components. Each Sunkit is individually assembled to meet the customer's specific requirements. For more info circle #116



New **Square D** brand combination service entrance devices from **Schneider Electric** provide homebuilders the flexibility to offer a solar-ready home. The devices are suitable for use with a utility interactive inverter by featuring space for a back-fed inverter circuit breaker.

For more info circle #117



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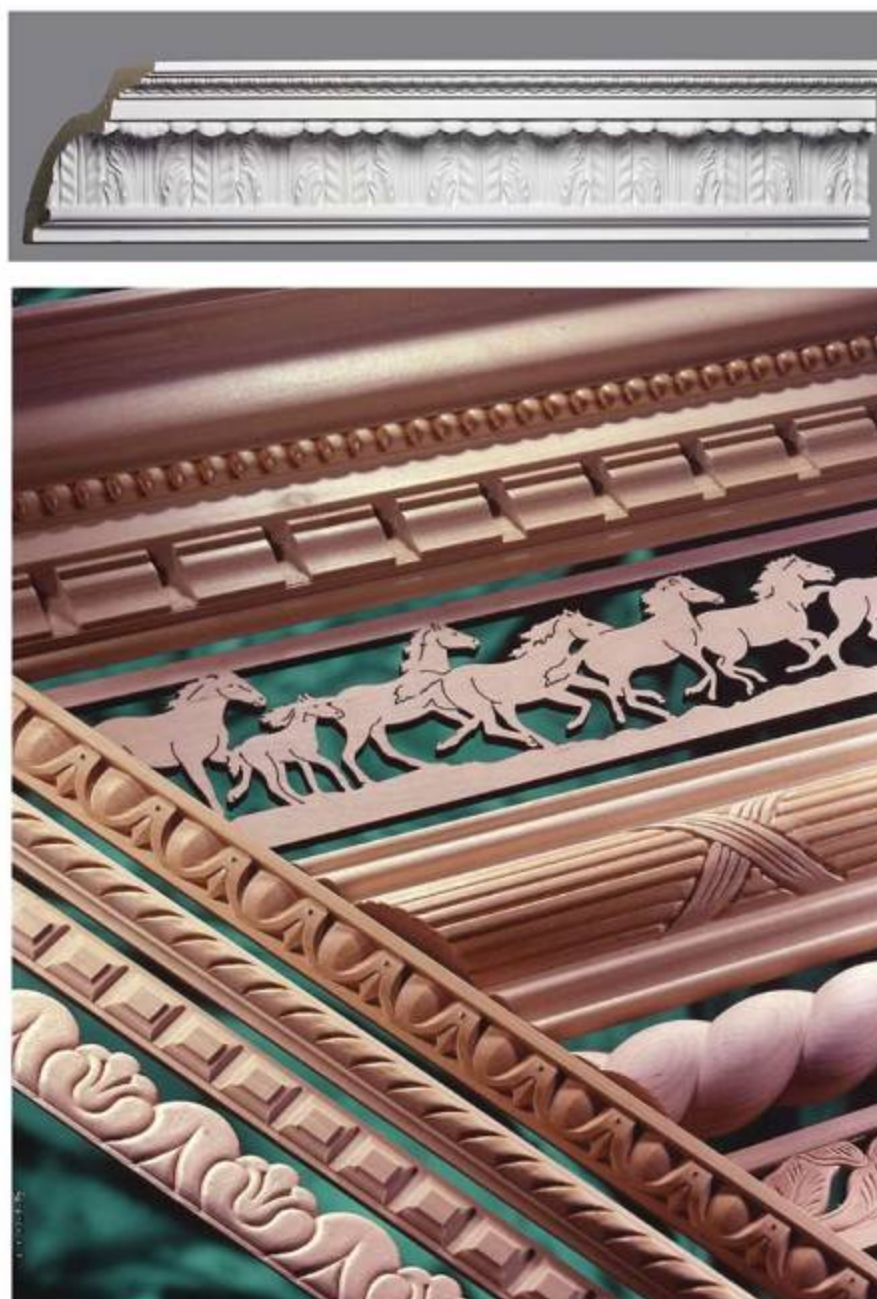
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For more info circle #118

The French Water Leaf moulding is one of more than 35 new crown and cornice moulding additions to the **Century Architectural Specialties** collection. The mouldings are designed to offer individuality, opulence and elegance to any room. They are available in 14-ft. lengths. For more info circle #30

Laser-carved wood mouldings from **Architectural Products by Outwater** are manufactured from Baltic wood. The pieces are suitable for either staining or painting to match any decor, and can be used as decorative accents in a child's room, wall borders or galley rails. Profiles are available in nominal 4-ft. lengths. For more info circle #31



Häfele's new Arcadian Collection includes items such as custom-finished or unfinished solid-wood doors, carved solid-wood corbels, mouldings, onlays, posts and matching handles and knobs. For more info circle #32

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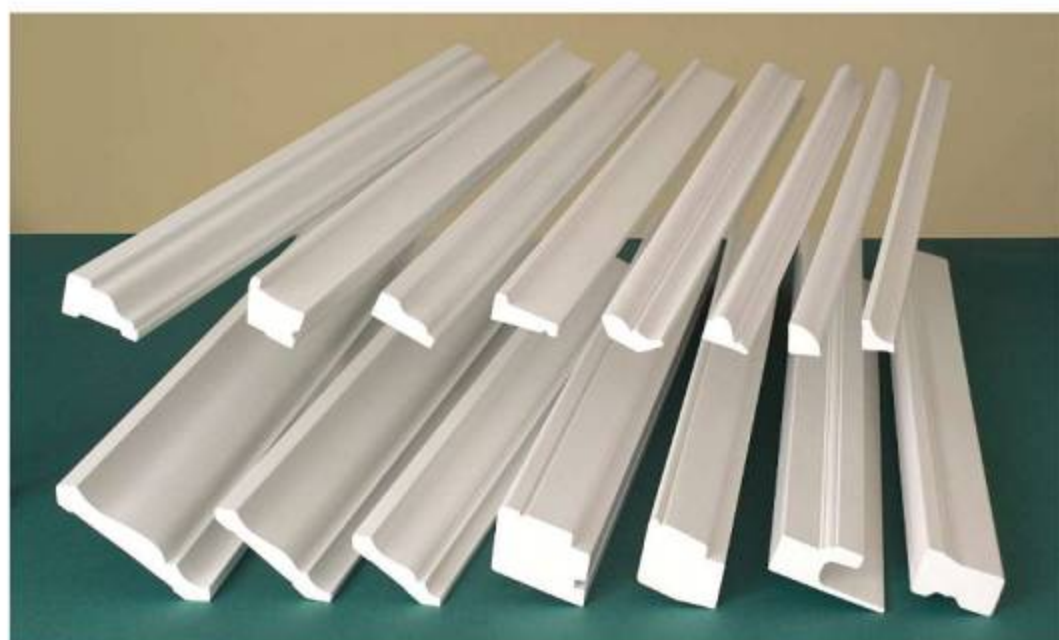
For more info circle #28



The Harrington radiused cornice by **Melton Classics** is custom-designed to customer specifications in polyurethane in pre-primed, one-piece sections to provide ease of installation and reduce labor costs. For more info circle #33



Enkeboll Designs expands its Art Nouveau collection (above) designed to capture the era of embellishment which revered nature, and has been reinterpreted exclusively for contemporary appeal through the artistic skills of world-renowned wood sculptor Melsik Yaghiazaryan. The collection offers designers, architects, cabinet-makers and custom home builders ways to differentiate and enhance value. For more info circle #34



Kleer Lumber advances its moulding offering with a new formulation to more precisely match the color and sheen of its trimboards, sheets and other products (left). The mouldings are ideal for both interior and exterior applications and feature 16 styles and thicknesses including base cap, bed, brick, cove, crown, drip cap, historical sill, quarter round, rake, shingle band, sill nosing and wainscot cap. For more info circle #35

Fypon interior urethane mouldings (right) are light-weight and durable. Crisp, clean lines are moulded into each piece. They resist warping, rotting, mildew and insect infestations.



A miterless crown moulding system is also available offering straight cuts for mouldings attached to the wall that meet with corner and dentil pieces for fast installation. For more info circle #36

Aluminum cornice moulding extrusions are available from **SAF-Perimeter Systems**. The Designer Series extruded cornice mouldings provide precision joints, sharp, crisp lines and refined detail. The cornices may be used for both new construction and historic renovations. No special methods and tools are required for installation. For more info circle #37





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For more info circle #29



Ovation Cabinetry's woods, glazes and paints can be applied to all-wood traditional cabinetry with face-frame construction, natural maple veneer interior and custom options. Its drawer box is dovetailed hardwood with full-extension slides. Soft close is standard. For more info circle #38



Miraton from Hanwha is the next generation in premium quartz surfacing, suitable for a wide range of applications including flooring, interior wall cladding and vanities. Miraton is dense, non-porous, stain-resistant and requires virtually no maintenance. For more info circle #39



Most cabinet doors by Keystone Wood Specialties are available in frame-only and multi-lite versions. Available in more than 20 wood species, doors may be ordered polish-sanded, ready to finish, or choose from more than 36 standard finishes. Custom color matching is available. For more info circle #40



The new on-demand water heater from Quieside Corp. is available in four capacities ranging from 99,000 to 199,000 Btu/h. S-Line heat exchangers allow the unit to reach efficiency levels of more than 90 percent, qualifying it for the 30 percent federal tax rebate. For more info circle #42



Plyboo bamboo architectural plywood and flooring by Smith & Fong has secured certification according to the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council and established a responsibly managed bamboo forest resource. The product is available throughout North America. For more info circle #41



Saroyan's TreeSmart line of unfinished engineered flooring has a 3/16-in. wear layer designed to be identical to solid wood flooring in wear and performance, yet yields as much as four times the flooring from one tree as solid wood. Premium lengths up to 12 ft. and widths from 2 1/4 to 10 in. are offered and feature scarf-joint construction. For more info circle #43



The Peel and Heat Complete line of high-performance underlayments for effective crack suppression and radiant in-floor heating is available from Protecto Wrap. Pre-wired heating panels are included for easy electrical connection. For more info circle #44

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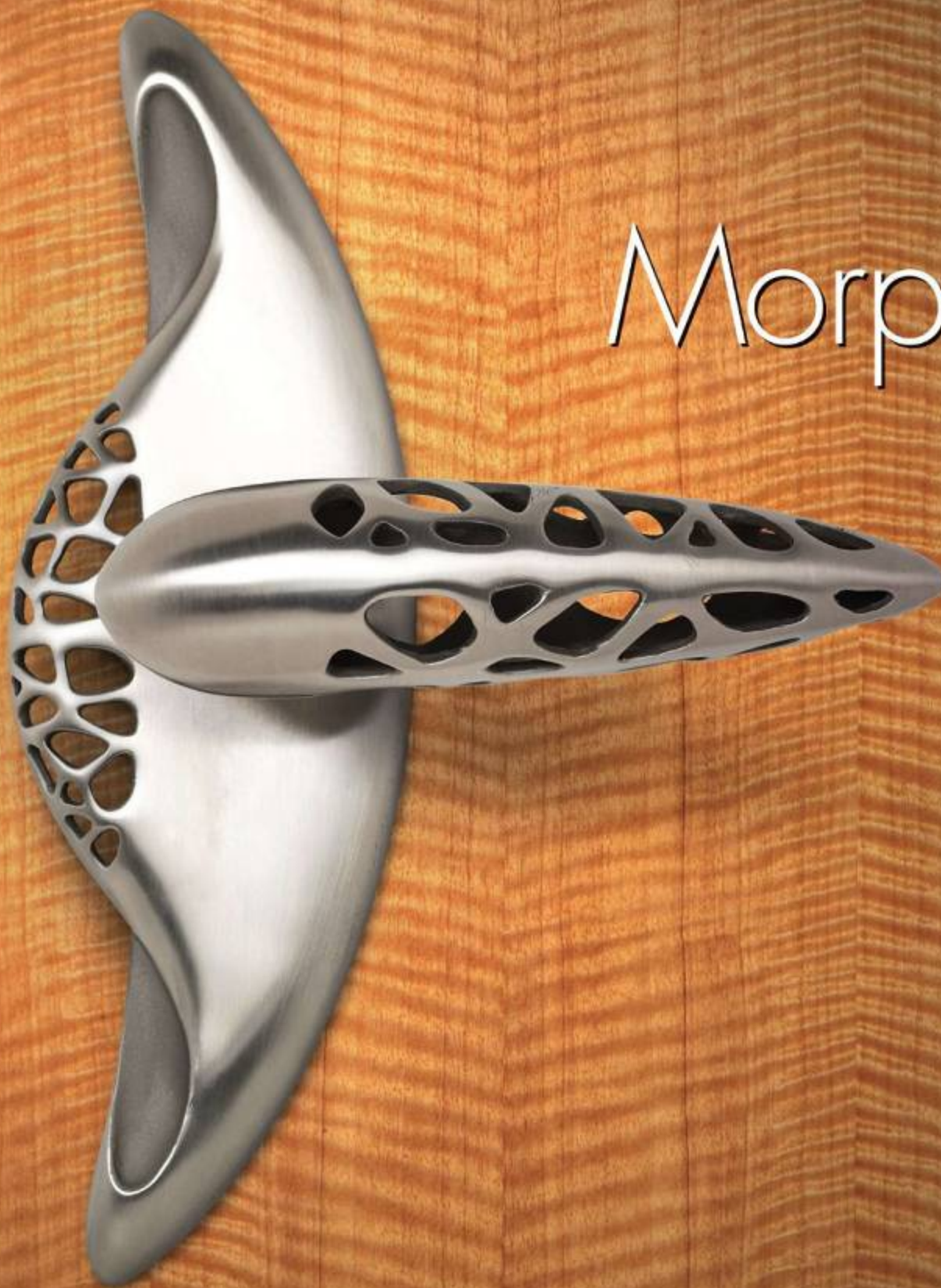
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Morphic style



The Morphic line of decorative hardware doesn't magically change shape as its name suggests. Morphic hardware, however, can take on the personality of almost any home.

"It's really up to the customer which type of door they want it on, or which type of home they want it in," says Anne Pierce, CEO, Martin Pierce Hardware Inc., Los Angeles. "It's good for the institutional look to a beach house; the hardware can be taken in many directions. It's whatever the builder or architect wants."

Anne's husband Martin created the Morphic line and the company. Martin's inspiration for the Morphic hardware comes mostly from watching science fiction movies, "but also from organisms in nature. It's a bit futuristic, but the style also latches onto organic forms in nature," she says.

The Morphic line typically is shown in steel,

but it's also available in bronze. With darker hues, it can even fit into an art nouveau-style home, Anne Pierce says. "When cast in bronze, it can fit in a classical home very well, too," she adds.

Morphic pieces are made of cast 316 stainless steel. Many Martin Pierce pieces are formed using the lost wax method. "The hardware pieces — all hand-made — are created in wax and a shell is formed around it. Molten steel is then poured into that shell which causes the wax to melt and disappear, or become lost. Imagine the wax literally pouring out of the mold," Pierce explains. The lost wax method allows for incredible detail, she adds.

"Our philosophy is to make art into hardware: To create original designs, artistic designs, and have integrity in what we do. We're not interested in generic," Pierce insists. Martin Pierce is always game for a

challenge, and would consider custom work if the concept is original and fun. "If it's the right project that makes sense, Martin will consider it," Pierce says.

Hardware from all of Pierce's lines are kept in stock, but most of the larger pieces are made to order. Turnaround time on door hardware is six weeks, Pierce says. "We have showrooms around the country, and we make an effort not to work directly with a homeowner. We'd rather work with a design professional or builder."

Martin Pierce is a self-taught hardware maker who was trained in England as a woodcarver and furniture maker. He became a sculptor focusing in 3-D art. Pierce also makes furniture under the Martin Pierce Furnishings brand.

For more information circle 15 or visit martinpierce.com. — Rob Heselbarth



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