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Shades of Green

Ways to ease clients into “green” design and remodeling

By: [Stacey Freed](#)



Green selection: Holiday Kitchens’ recycled wood fiber cabinets with wood dowels and formaldehyde-free glues; Bosch Energy Star appliances.

Credit: Jeff Kida

Confusion is rife: Many consumers think that big-ticket items such as solar panels and geothermal heating and cooling are essential to being “green”; others are uncertain about what “green” really is and the legitimacy of green labeling; then there’s the perception that building green and choosing eco-friendly products is cost-prohibitive.

But there are ways to ease clients into sustainable design and show them that green need not be an all-or-nothing approach. Victoria Schomer, a green design/build consultant and educator in Asheville, N.C., focuses on planning

and [building science](#) to help her clients become greener, while Jeff Kida, a designer and kitchen and bath dealer, and the owner of [DDS Design Services](#), in suburban Chicago, takes a more product-oriented approach, which he describes as “reasonably green.”

GOOD FOUNDATIONS

While not discounting the importance of green products or improved insulation, Schomer says there’s much that can be done by repurposing existing materials and making design changes to admit more daylight, provide more connection with nature, and maximize existing space to limit the need to increase a home’s footprint. All are part of “green” design, and none is a budget-buster.

“Using green products is really the icing on the cake,” Schomer says. “If you don’t use good building science as the basis for how you renovate, you won’t have a successful project.”

HOUSE VS. HOME

Schomer applied these principles when renovating her own home (shown above). She also used certain green products, including recycled denim cotton insulation and energy-efficient windows. And although she encourages clients to get an energy audit for a baseline, she also points out that it’s not mandatory. In her own home, she had so little insulation that a pre-project audit would have been a waste. Instead, Schomer opted to do an audit at the project’s conclusion, which showed good results and highlighted the need for additional work to tighten the basement, which ultimately affects the main living space.

“Green is about creating a sustainable and healthy home for people; it’s not just about a super-insulated, energy-efficient building envelope,” Schomer says. “We’d all be better served by focusing on ideas for creating a home that will enhance our health, our quality of life, and encourage us and our families to live more sustainably.”

REASONABLY GREEN

Remodeler Jeff Kida’s approach to sustainable design is about being reasonable when it comes to price and helping clients make educated choices about which “green” products to use. “Any product that claims to be green ... [it’s] subjective,” Kida says. “To some people there will never be a green enough product, service, or company.”

Kida assesses a client’s wants, needs, and lifestyle. If the client is interested in eco-friendly products, he presents them with options and shows them why product A might be more eco-friendly than product B. He bases his decisions on available ratings from trade associations as well as from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Some of the products he recommends include Holiday Kitchens’ Robin Wilson Home collection; Bosch Energy Star and high-efficiency appliances; Hi-Macs solid surface countertops from LG; Kohler cast-iron sinks; Delta Pilar faucets with Touch2O water-saver technology; backsplash material from Granite & Marble Resources; FloorScore-certified Adura vinyl tile by Mannington; Sherwin-Williams “Environmentally Preferred” wall color; and recessed, undercabinet, and compact fluorescent lighting from Con-Tech and Juno.

—*Stacey Freed, senior editor, [REMODELING](#).*



D. Kitchen

The kitchen was completely rewired and air sealed and was insulated using recycled cotton denim. Schomer reused existing cabinets — keeping them out of the landfill — as well as hundreds of feet of existing trim, molding, and 2x4s.

Walnut paneling removed from rooms upstairs was used in the basement in place of drywall, which is much more moisture-absorbent.

New high-performance windows pull more light into the space and better connect it to the property's newly terraced north hill.

Preserving the Footprint

Green shaded areas show additions; dotted areas show existing items that were relocated.

E. Outdoor Living

The deck was added to provide access to the garden and as an additional entrance. The deck's structural wood is new and pressure-treated, but the floor and railing wood were reclaimed from the old carport and its roof.

New aluminum seamless gutters, fabricated on site, mean fewer opportunities for leaks.

A. Bathrooms

Schomer used dual-flush low-flow toilets, low-flow fixtures, and shower heads with a chlorine filtering system in her home's bathrooms.

D. Dining Room

Green building consultant Victoria Schomer shortened the run for the HVAC duct to the dining room. (It used to run the entire length of the dining room to just near the door onto the deck. It now comes out into the dining room near the kitchen, not the far end of the space.) The less distance heat has to travel through the ducts before entering a space, the more heat you will get.

B. Living Room

To gain more daylight in the living room, which loses a lot of natural light due to the front porch roof, Schomer placed a skylight in the porch roof right by the windows.

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