

Hartman takes new role to be 'part of solution'

Architect retires from firm to focus on green dialogue

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Devon Hartman is retiring - sort of. At 59, the respected architect is leaving daily operations at the practice he built with friend and partner Bill Baldwin 30 years ago.

In that time, their Claremont-based firm, Hartman Baldwin, has earned wide respect as a leader in innovative, green building and design.

But the move comes as a natural part of a larger trajectory that both partners have been working toward for years: Baldwin will continue to run the business, now expanding; while Hartman will take lessons learned to a national dialogue on energy efficiency.



By Paul Alvarez/Contributing Photographer
Devon Hartman is retiring from his role at Hartman-Baldwin Design/Build in Claremont, which has become known for its expertise in sustainable practices.

The hope, they say, is that both ends will continue to inform the other, with local examples of successful initiatives influencing the direction of policy, in turn helping support deeper and more prolific green solutions at the local level.

"I think that we've planned for this in the sense of willing the company to outlast both of us," says Baldwin. "We're proud of how unique the company is so in that sense it's a natural evolution."

More specifically, Baldwin describes Hartman's move as a natural outgrowth of the partners' cumulative expertise in building efficiency and green building practices - a "logical step" of bringing that expertise into local and even national government dialogues.

"Devon is taking that step, and asking how can our industry have a great impact on energy efficiency and climate issues? The building impact of energy usage is shocking - so how can our industry have a positive contribution?"

For Hartman, this realization - that buildings, his passion and daily bread, were a major source of pollution - marked a crucial turning point. "After we realized we were part of the problem," he says, "we decided we could maybe be part of the solution."

Now known to be the largest emitters of greenhouse gases - "the carbon dioxide and poisons from burning fossil fuels," says Hartman - buildings are a bigger culprit than even automotive or industrial emissions.

"So we've been spending a lot of time getting our heads around that and understanding what we can actually do about it," he says.



Hartman-Baldwin worked on this home on College Way in Claremont.

Paul Alvarez,
Contributing Photographer

"Since I've been in architecture and construction for the last 30 years, I'm an expert in building practices and sustainable building practices. But in the last three years we've become experts in building science and processes to retrofit buildings so they can save massive amounts of energy and reduce carbon emissions."

Hartman says he'll be consulting with cities and major construction companies around the country "to help formulate plans and strategic methods to address this problem."

Lately, he's been working on a local Claremont project, a collaborative effort among the city, volunteers and local green organizations. The Claremont Home Energy Retrofit Project is aimed at "educating the community to the power and benefits of energy efficiency in our existing building stock," says Hartman, adding that a goal of retrofitting one percent of the city's homes will jump to 10 percent (1300 homes) next year, with a goal of 15 percent energy consumption reduction by 2015.

The idea, he says, is to create a model for other cities to follow.

"Devon's been involved in energy efficiency for several years now," says Chris Veirs, sustainability coordinator for the City of Claremont. "I think fits well with his personal philosophy... and he's been helping to add some professional insight."

But beyond bringing experience to the table, Veirs says Hartman also helps the project by connecting it with larger movements on the national level.

"He happens to be on a weekly basis in communication with the highest level policy setters in the state and even at the federal government level regarding energy efficiency retrofits, so he's brought a lot of energy to the ground and a lot of great insight," says Veirs.

These efforts fit into a larger statewide movement, which Hartman notes includes new goals from the California Public Utilities Commission to retrofit every home to an average 30 percent energy use reduction.

"California is first in the world to have a comprehensive, statewide plan to reduce greenhouse gases," he says. "The CPUC has set aside millions dollars to incentivize home owners to perform deep energy retrofit procedures, up to \$3500 per homeowner."

"My goal since I've been in the remodeling industry for 35 years," he says, "is to unite the industry around some strategic solutions to help them perform these home performance technologies on a national scale. If we have 120 million homes to retrofit in the next 20 years, my thought is the only way we're going to do that is to ignite successful remodeling and construction initiatives around the country and help them ramp up to do this retrofit work."

Hartman Baldwin is continuing to grow its business and incubate new practices, with an expansion Baldwin describes as based on "excellence rather than ambition" or geographic or economic objectives.

"Hartman Baldwin has always been a laboratory for cutting-edge building techniques and quality," adds Hartman, "so this is an opportunity to continue to lead that discourse, as well as fold in lessons we've learned, creating a nice feedback loop for us."

This cross-communication seems to outline a continuing connection between the partners as they branch out and away from their home base.

"It's a very exciting time for us, because often times when you're inside the business it's hard to have time to look around," says Hartman, "but being able to extract from daily operations and have time to participate in larger conversations, it can be a very creative process."

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