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From: Remodeling magazine November 2010 | Posted on: November 16, 2010

History Redux

Patience, due diligence, good design, and bartering help bring the past into the future.

By: [Stacey Freed](#)

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Putting together a sustainable design for a historic home comes with its own set of issues, but Dennis Allen and Devon Hartman found a way to both bring a run-down boarding house into the 21st century and to develop a mini-community that includes a three-unit new build and a new garage. All of which, says Allen, principal in Dennis Allen Associates, in Santa Barbara, Calif., will be the highest LEED Platinum residences in the country.

Historic Hassle?

Allen and Hartman, who is former principal in the design/build firm Hartman Baldwin, in Claremont, Calif., both wanted to develop a sustainable property to which they and their wives could eventually retire. They found the perfect spot in downtown Santa Barbara with a 19th-century home on the National Register.

The local historical society was pleased that Allen and Hartman wanted to conserve the exterior of the old structure but it took issue with the solar panels, which might be visible from the street. The historical society also wanted the remodel to keep “the old single glazed and leaky windows,” Allen says. “But we convinced them otherwise. You can’t get [old windows] tight even if you rebuild them.”

As more older homes are retrofitted, the issue of modern sustainability practices clashing with historic preservation requirements will increase. The [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) has several position papers supporting sustainability, and it “advocates the appropriate siting of renewable energy infrastructure.” Yet it also promotes “weatherization” of existing windows instead of replacement.

Allen and Hartman hired a local architectural historian as a consultant. “We explained what we wanted to do with energy efficiency and told her we would do everything we could to come as close to the appearance of the original. She came on board and her report held weight with the Historic Landmarks Commission.”



This historic Santa Barbara boarding house now exceeds LEED Platinum standards.

They installed Lowens windows with a U-value of 0.34 and solar heat gain coefficient of 0.38. On the back roof is a 5kW photovoltaic system, with flat high-density Sharp panels that are hidden from view. The home will be close to net-zero energy use.

Credit: courtesy of Meghan Beierle

Better with Barter

Once they were over the 14-month permitting hurdle, building began in earnest. Hartman connected with two marketers — a lawyer and a public relations executive — who helped the pair find vendors and manufacturers willing to barter goods for services. For example, [Global Eco Soil Solutions](#) donated Earthmister, a subsoil irrigation system, and [Rinnai](#) donated its newest on-demand 96% efficient condensing hot water units. [American Clay](#) discounted its interior plaster products 50%, and Trestlewood <http://www.trestlewood.com/> offered a 50% discount on recycled Douglas fir and oak flooring and old beams.

In return, the companies are featured on [Allen Associates' website](#), and the remodeling company has so far held 10 seminars or workshops for architects, builders, and landscapers focused on green systems and products.

Although it took extra time for Allen and Hartman to negotiate for products, and there was some education for the marketers, "It's been a good thing," Allen says. The remodelers have also taken advantage of state and federal stimulus money and in total have saved just over \$200,000 on the entire project with about \$35,000 in savings just on the remodeled home.

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

This is a longer version of an article that appeared in the November 2010 issue of [REMODELING](#).

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