


URBAN UPDATE



The home's outdoor
and indoor areas
flow together easily,
increasing the home's
livable space.

**AN EL PRESIDIO INFILL
PROJECT EXEMPLIFIES
THE BEAUTY OF
ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

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ILEY CORNELL AND RICHARD MARSCHNER did not set out to buy a green house—let alone one constructed almost entirely of recycled materials such as old blue jeans and crushed wheat stalks. But then the house-hunters from Cleveland, Ohio, met up with builder Michael Keith of Contemporary West Development and learned of his plans for Franklin Court, an infill development in downtown's El Presidio neighborhood where neo-bungalow architecture respectful of Tucson's history would meet up with the latest in environmentally responsible housing.

En route to the airport in 2004, the couple postponed their return flight to Ohio and stayed in Tucson to buy what would become one of seven award-winning homes tucked into a former parking lot in Tucson's oldest neighborhood. "What we bought was Michael's vision of downtown living—and we've never been sorry," Marschner says. Today the two radio veterans live in an airy and light-filled home built around a serene and spacious 1,000-square-foot patio. They can entertain easily, bike to lunch and the market, and walk almost everywhere else downtown, racking up less than 500 miles a month on their single automobile. "Michael built us a beautiful house with the additional bonus of being a really green house," Cornell says. "It's influenced us to learn more about green living," she explains.

Their home is also testament to the fact that green building does not necessarily require the



corrugated metal and cooling towers common today. "We're not loft people," Marschner says. "We're not ultramodern people, either," Cornell adds. "We didn't give up anything to have a green house. We didn't give up anything aesthetically, or in comfort. It was all gain." When approached from Franklin, on what appears to be a zero-lot-line, the two-story rowhouse fronts directly on the sidewalk, just like those on nearby blocks. "We've had a number of people ask who did our restoration," Cornell reports.

But inside, the home updates the formality of Craftsman-style homes with a modern, open

▲ Low VOC paint from locally owned Citron Paint enlivens the home's interior.

floorplan, while providing a harmonious backdrop for the couple's collections of antique American pottery and music boxes. A *zaguán*—a hall that runs straight through a house and out to a patio or courtyard in back—is traditional in Spanish Colonial architecture and a signature of homes designed by local architects Bob Lanning and Leo Katz, who together designed the Marschner/Cornell home.

But here the walls of the *zaguán* only rise waist-high between the kitchen and living room. Pillars organize the space above. Marschner even insisted on taking out the section of wall that would normally back the kitchen range's hood. The retooling retains the Craftsman sense of elegance, while ensuring that Cornell and Marschner can simultaneously cook and enjoy guests in the living room.



The cheery, light-filled kitchen echoes the updated Craftsman style found throughout the house.

THE WINDOWS LOOK LIKE OLD-FASHIONED CASEMENTS, BUT ARE MARVIN HIGH-EFFICIENCY MODELS.



▲ The honed granite countertop doubles as a blackboard.

Awards for Franklin Court & Builder Michael Keith

- Sonoran Institute Building from the Best, 2006
- Tucson-Pima County Historical Commission, 2006, stating in part, "This type of high-quality historically compatible infill is a major contribution to the El Presidio Neighborhood and a model for new construction throughout the community."
- Visionary Downtown Leadership Award, 2006
- Mayor's Heart of Downtown, 2007



◀ The patio provides privacy in a dense urban setting.

KEITH SOUGHT OUT RECYCLED AND, WHENEVER POSSIBLE, LOCALLY PRODUCED BUILDING MATERIALS.

Traditional off-white baseboards—the chief trim color from Tucson’s own Citron Paint is called “brie”—frame the pale-green (“palo verde” and “grass stains”) walls of the living room. But these baseboards are wheatboard, made of pressed stalks of wheat left over from harvest. The windows look like old-fashioned casements, but are Marvin High Efficiency models. Even the kitchen island packs an environmental bonus—the triple-honed black granite surface acts as a chalkboard, providing a handy space for writing messages and lists without using paper.

Upstairs, the home is a wonderful interplay of light and colors that dance off of steep eaves, built-in shelves, and recycled-wood floors. Colors change as sunlight and shadows pass over the rooms each day. The design is so private that the couple skipped adding curtains that might obscure the windows. Outside, a patio/courtyard moves seamlessly from a roofed outdoor sitting room to an open barbecue area with gas fireplace and wood-burning pizza oven, to a garden zone planted with drought-resistant flowers and trees.



A gorgeous milk-glass entryway light began life as the top of a gas pump at a station where Marschner worked as a teenager. When the station was remodeled, he salvaged one of the globes—and carried it around for the next four decades before finding a home for it in Franklin Court. He hunted clear to Vermont to find the simple, strongly sculptural light fixtures that link the kitchen and dining areas. But these wonderful details are icing on the cake of a house founded on the thoroughly green idea of building an infill project of not-so-big homes complete with private patios for energy-saving outdoor living, on the tiny, 2,500-square-foot lots new zoning

▲ clockwise from left: powder room, living room, guest bedroom

allowed. Keith also sought out recycled and, whenever possible, locally produced building materials. Energy efficiency is built into the very walls, which are constructed of concrete-filled foam blocks.

Green “really starts with the box. It’s not sexy, but it’s so effective,” Keith says. “The big concepts were density and courtyards and urban living but in such a way that it would be something that would

be eminently desirable,” Lanning says. “I think urban for some people is a negative term. But we wanted something that would be sought after. It feels like you’re in your own little oasis or own little world that is protected from the bigger city.”

Freelance writer Rebecca Boren would move downtown, but the dogs refuse to give up their big backyard.



Recycled wood floors add warmth to the master bedroom.

RESOURCES

architects: Bob Lanning, of Lanning Architecture, 792-0265, and Leo R. Katz, Architect, 325-3904 • **builder/developer:** Michael Keith of Contemporary West Development, 881-6944 • **concrete floors:** integral color concrete flooring with natural pigments, Davis Colors, www.daviscolors.com • **high-efficiency windows:** Marvin Windows and Doors, www.marvin.com • **icynene spray foam insulation:** Thermal Performance InSealators, 760-0608, www.mylarizonafoam.com • **insulated concrete form blocks:** Mikey Block, 623-3023, www.mikeyblock.com • **insulation:** UltraTouch natural cotton-fiber insulation (recycled denim), Bonded Logic, 480-812-9114, www.bondedlogic.com • **landscape:** Jim Pollack Design, 202-460-9081, www.jimpollackdesign.com • **light fixtures:** Hubbardton Forge, www.vtforge.com

• **low VOC paint:** Citron Paint, 886-5800, www.citronpaint.com
 • **recycled cellulose (newspaper) insulation:** Preston Insulation, 623-5423, www.prestoninsulation.com • **roofing:** recycled rubber (faux slate) roofing tiles, EcoStar Carlisle, www.premiumroofs.com • **salvaged lumber:** Windfall Lumber, Originate Natural Building Materials, 792-4207, www.originate-nbm.com, www.windfalllumber.com • **solar tubes:** solar tube daylighting, The Solar Store, 322-5180, www.solarstore.com • **steel framing:** Studco 80%-minimum recycled material: Allied Tube & Conduit, 602-272-6606, www.alliedtube.com • **wheatboard millwork:** Originate Natural Building Materials, 792-4207, www.originate-nbm.com • **toilets:** Caroma dual-flush toilets, Sunstate Sales, 602-484-7148, www.caromausa.com