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GREEN AND EASY

Enviro-friendly San Francisco homes open for public tours

Paul Kilduff, Special to The Chronicle
Saturday, September 22, 2007

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Chronicle / Eric Luse
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Suzanne Dehne's basement office (shown here) and the home of Alma Hecht are two stops on the Build It Green Home Tour. The tour is in partnership with the West Coast Green building conference. Chronicle photo by Eric Luse

Remodeling or building from scratch with a green frame of mind may seem like a prescription for added cost and complexity, but as the seven San Francisco households on the Build It Green Home Tour underscore, building green continues to become more mainstream.

All seven tour stops, which range from rebuilds and modest remodels to apartment complexes, conform to visions of what green homes might look like in the

not-too-distant future. The green flourishes go from the addition of solar panels to cutting-edge touches like radiant heat (in which warm water is piped through floorboards) to using salvaged wood and concrete made with fly ash, a byproduct of electricity plants that run on coal. Here is some of what you'll

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see.

ON THE TOUR: Modest changes, widespread results

One example of a small-scale green remodel is the conversion of part of the garage into a home office in a Richmond District duplex. Wanting to spend more time with their child, architect couple Suzanne Dehne and Joseph Wrigley decided to join forces and create their own firm, Sujo Design Inc. It not only allowed them to work at home, it also gave them an opportunity to be a green test kitchen, so to speak.

"For clients to try things, we felt like we had to be the guinea pigs - if it's good enough for us, it's probably good enough for them," Dehne said. She also liked the idea of not "building out a brand-new home on pristine land."

The obvious choice for the office was the back of their garage. They created space for the conversion by replacing the original gravity furnace with a radiant heating system and tucking the boiler into a corner. This had the added benefit of eliminating the need for air ducts and flue in the upstairs unit's kitchen and bathroom, thereby opening up some space there. (Dehne's sister lives in the unit upstairs.)

They used bamboo flooring, exposed concrete as a finished floor and took redwood,

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which was being used for storage areas in the garage, and turned it into shelving. They even have plans to reuse some of the redwood to make a fort in the backyard.

And who says green can't be fun? The couple added a personal touch to "mark" the path to the office: Before the concrete had dried, they let their son and dog walk through it, leaving footprints in it. Unfortunately, they failed to alert the contractor, who was appalled when he came to check the concrete.

ON THE TOUR: Earthquake bungalow redo

Landscape architect **Xyl** by Alma Hecht felt constrained by living in a 500-square-foot **WHU** Originally designed for refugees of the 1906 earthquake. Her solution? She doubled living space by digging out her basement. With the addition of another 500 square feet below - Hecht refers to it as her "undition" - the modest bungalow, which is tucked behind another earthquake cottage Hecht owns, now boasts a guest room, sitting room, studio and extra bath. It's plenty of room for her and her ever-present canine companion, Sabu, an [Australian shepherd](#) blue heeler.

The green aspects of the remodel include cork floors downstairs that were installed without glue and the removal of old vinyl flooring upstairs to reveal the original 100-year-old [Douglas fir](#) subfloor. To make the new downstairs look like the older upstairs, Hecht had the drywall treated with an earth plaster finish. There are also many salvaged doors throughout the house, including one that looks as if it came from an old phone booth, and a fence alongside the cottage fashioned from reclaimed redwood floors. Instead of tossing the old leaky windows that she had replaced upstairs, she turned them into kitchen cabinet doors.

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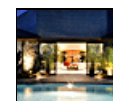
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