





Eco-Friendly Sanctuary

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MUSIC ROOM



MARY KRANING & WES HARDING

When Wes Harding, a 32-year-old third-generation Long Beach resident, and his girlfriend Mary Kraning purchased their 900-square-foot two bedroom/one bathroom Belmont Heights home, they saw potential after a handful of buyers saw problems.

The residence in question suffered from falling ceiling and plaster, mold, a roach infestation, no water, no gas, broken sewer pipes, broken windows, an electrical meter falling off the side of the house and petrified carpet.

For the couple it was simple — Harding would take his professional ability to transform the average home into an eco-friendly sanctuary and apply it to their new piece of real estate.

By viewing the property — which includes a detached garage and approximately 4,800-square-feet of backyard — as a blank canvas from which they could paint their ideal home, the duo finished approximately 90 percent of the inside of the home, which also features an attic, sun room and mud room.

Upgrades include a tankless water heater, a 95 percent efficient forced air furnace and insulation that all qualify for the federal tax incentive, a dual-flush toilet and washing machine that qualify for the city's and SoCal WaterSmart rebate, a radiant barrier that helps keep the home and attic cool, salvaged cabinets and bathroom sink, and a sun tunnel to add natural light to the bathroom. The couple estimate approximately \$75,000 worth of repair went into the home, but are quick to point



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out that hiring a contractor to rebuild their residence would have cost nearly \$150,000.

Eventually, they said, cutting into the backyard by adding onto the house is a possibility, but for now, Harding and Kraning are happy with the property as is.

Harding is a graduate of CSULB, where he earned a degree in communications. He once worked as a public relations agent in the technology industry for approximately 18 months before deciding that sitting behind a desk was not the ideal life for him. Needing a new direction, he took his childhood hobby — building things — and made it his profession.

After bouncing around a few construction companies for nearly five years, the amount of handyman jobs he received opened his eyes to the possibility of working for himself. But it wasn't until a 2006 trade show, when Harding realized his new industry was on the verge of a major change, and the only way to keep his business afloat was to stay ahead of the curve.

"I saw a one-hour seminar on green building, and ever since, I've been hooked," Harding said. "I wanted to be on the forefront of the industry and [the green movement] incorporates the latest technologies with concepts that have been around for centuries. After the seminar, I could see it was about building a house better."



KITCHEN



BATHROOM

Harding said one good example of green construction is installing systems correctly so that energy is not lost and wasted in areas such as attics and crawlspaces. He also recommends a home performance energy audit to those interested in any type of remodel. These exams allow the former Naples Island gondolier to better understand a home's environment through the use of infrared inspections, combustion safety tests and full diagnostic tests that show air leakage.

"Ninety percent of what I do is educate people on the benefits of green building," Harding said. "I do a different type of building, and some people have a preconceived idea that green building is not cost effective."

The remaining 10 percent of Harding's job includes helping Mother Nature by finding energy efficient solutions to construction issues, which range from improving a structure's indoor air quality to installing new mechanical systems that save homeowners money.

Harding's knowledge of eco-conscious building has led him to teaching positions at his alma maters, CSULB and Long Beach City College. At LBCC, he teaches government-subsidized classes on green building that help industry types, displaced construction workers and people with no construction experience find work by giving them the proper tools to stay on the cusp of the burgeoning green field.

"It's important to remember that there is no silver bullet to a green home remodel."
—Wes Harding

Harding's clients today range from those looking to lower their monthly bills, people interested in improving the quality of their homes and customers wanting to help save the planet. Like many other businesses, the construction industry has suffered from the country's economic downturn, but Harding has seen his work increase, which he attributes to staying at the forefront of his profession.

Whether the project in question is his or a client's, Harding said the way to a greener home is patience and persistence. "It's important to remember that there is no silver bullet to green home remodel, but instead, a thousand silver BBs'." ■

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