

Down in Laguna Beach, architect Anders Lasater took somewhat of a similar green-ovation approach to a 1938 ocean view Spanish Mediterranean Revival cottage. Noting the “pedigree” of the home, Lasater secured historic status with the city. The original architect, Aubrey St. Clair, and builder, Arthur Littlejohns, are known for their prominent work, such as Laguna Beach City Hall, he says.



“We knew we couldn’t build up or out since the house was on a small lot and was historic,” says Lasater. “Instead, we found a way to fit a modern lifestyle into the existing shell by making every space work twice as hard. We transformed the interior completely while restoring the exterior to a historically accurate look.”

Refinishing and bleaching the original oak floors established a clean foundation throughout the home. A reconfigured floor plan made way for a modern kitchen and master suite and provided an openness through the living and dining rooms that was previously missing in the 1,834-square-foot home.

Incorporating green technology was a must. Efficient windows, low-flow plumbing fixtures and flash water heaters minimize energy use along with low-flush, in-wall tank toilets. “Sustainable design is really just another way to say ‘sensible’ design,” says Lasater.

“It’s easy to go out and employ all manner of new technologies, systems, materials, etc., and call yourself ‘green,’” he says. “It’s another thing to really pick apart a problem to find a solution that employs simple techniques that pay off both economically and ecologically.”

Case in point, the new rear deck balances sustainability with usability by using long-lasting, naturally durable South American ipe wood to better unify the home and sloping lot. “The ipe was the most expensive part of the deck, but it is also the most sustainable, since it will last for many years to come with little maintenance, no paint, no stains and no chemical treatments,” says Lasater.



“We embraced the idea of using what you’ve got,” he says. “We kept as much of the existing deck that wraps around the back of the house as we could, but used inexpensive wrought iron detailing to improve the look of it, tying it to the new deck. We used the leftover wood to help build the canopy structure over the deck and used some leftover material from another project to create the canopy. We used material creatively and found little details that gave a lot of bang for the buck.”

Small spaces become bigger and more useful with the clever solutions that innovators such as Lasater and Jones apply. “These are cute old homes that have been fixed up to last another 100 years,” says Jones. “We respect the authenticity and integrity of the homes without being completely enslaved to yesteryear.”

Thus some of the old homes among us become new again. For a generation of owners with values that define their eco-conscious lifestyles, a cramped and outdated home, when reinvented, combines the best of several worlds. The character of yesterday, the amenities of today and the satisfaction of knowing that the landfill is a little lighter, thanks in part to their choices. “The larger idea is that quality of space always trumps quantity of space,” says Lasater. “That’s not just sustainable; it’s common sense.”



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