

*“I’m a big believer in the idea of timelessness. When there is good pleasing design, it stays in place for a long time—people don’t want to change it.”* – Lydia Corser



kitchen before

## Overview and Scope

The owners of this 1200 square foot, 1948 house in Santa Cruz, California had an overall plan: remodel their home in a way that would allow them to live their lives out in one place. Because of mold and moisture issues, they had already upgraded the house envelope. Next they wanted to design a kitchen that would last forever, add a guest bathroom, and create a private master bath. The clients were looking for a way to redesign within the existing space of their concrete masonry home, and were sold on the idea of building green.

## Design Approach

The tiny kitchen was poorly laid out and poorly furnished, but adjoined a large mudroom. Reconfiguring the floorplan to subdivide the mudroom allowed the designer to expand the kitchen and add a guest bathroom without an addition or significant relocation of walls. Because the owners wanted to grow old in the building, every effort was made to ensure accessibility in the open plan. And although this project did not include a photovoltaic or graywater system, the remodel did include pre-wiring for a future PV system and pre-plumbing for graywater.

## Team and Process

Considering whether to hire a pro, the do-it-yourself homeowners were drawn to the unique materials in the Eco Interior’s green showroom, and to Lydia’s deep green approach. Lydia and Rory (the contractor Lydia recommended and the homeowners ultimately used) are Build It Green trained and certified. Their common green building background allowed them to easily form a team, recommending and implementing a wide range of green features that the clients would not have considered on their own.

**Location:** Santa Cruz, California  
**Homeowners:** Laura Alderman and Gary Garcia  
**Interior Designer:** Lydia Corser, Eco Interiors  
**General Contractor:** Rory Howland, Howland Construction  
**Area affected:** 250 ft<sup>2</sup>



*“It is valuable having someone certified Kitchen and Bath (Lydia is a Certified Master Kitchen and Bath Designer®) and also being an evangelist for green—a lot of people tout green, but is it really green? Where do you draw the line?”*

– Laura Alderman



Concrete countertop with natural wax finish

*“You have to be on top of the communication to come in at the right time in the process and make your case when the client is listening and open.”*

– Lydia Corser



Built-in eating area



Bamboo and FSC-certified maple cabinets

## Finance

The owners originally wanted to add a granny apartment to their garage, but the price estimate led them to a remodel instead. Ultimately the remodel cost 30-60% more than they budgeted – about the cost of the new construction estimate. Rather than the green features accounting for the extra cost—they had assumed those would add 20-30% to the cost—the additional work orders and add-ons were what drove the cost up. Because they had decided to move out for the work, they realized that this was the now-or-never time to do additional upgrades on the house.

## Lessons and Tradeoffs

The clients wanted to go green all the way, and so there were few compromises made.

The house is likely to achieve the first green building award in the City of Santa Cruz Green Building Program, meeting 133-135 out of 137 points available to this project (program total for remodeling projects is 464). The designer’s one regret is the high-VOC finish on the hardwood floors throughout the house, which the client acknowledges as their one non-green choice.

## By System

### Extra Features

- Pre-wired for photovoltaic panels
- Pre-plumbed for a graywater system

### HVAC

- Kitchen range hood exhausted directly outdoors

### Lighting

- Ambient lighting: airtight, insulation-contact-rated, recessed fluorescent cans
- Task lighting: under-cabinet fluorescent lights and over-table light fixtures made from 100% recycled cast aluminum
- Meets California’s title 24 requirements for lighting efficiency

### Appliances

- Energy-efficient dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer—beyond Energy Star
- High-efficiency water heater

### Wall and Ceiling Finishes

- Zero-VOC paint

### Floors and Flooring Products

- Natural linoleum flooring

### Furniture and Fittings

- Bamboo cabinetry with a natural low-VOC finish and pre-finished plywood bodies of FSC-certified maple with a formaldehyde-free, soy-based adhesive
- Cabinets with recycled plastic content
- Concrete countertops with locally produced natural wax finish