

Mountain Living[®]

THE GREEN ISSUE

NATURAL DREAM HOME

AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK
AT OUR ECO-FRIENDLY
LUXURY HOME

112

GREEN IDEAS
FOR YOUR HOME

FEBRUARY 2009

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THE MILDER HOUSE

OFF THE GRID IN THE GREAT SOUTHWEST “What’s next?” That succinct question drove Boston residents Fred and JJ Milder six years ago to buy a 125-acre home site in the Galisteo Basin Preserve, a nationally acclaimed conservation development in the high desert south of Santa Fe, New Mexico. “Our goal,” says Fred Milder, “was to move to an area where the outdoors was an essential element, with a connection to nature and a respect for the land.”

With such a connection in mind, the Milders worked with Boston-based William S. Harris, AIA, of Signer Harris Architects to build a 5,000-square-foot home with “rooms where walls completely disappear or glass doors fold away so that what was inside is outside,” says Fred Milder, who served as general contractor. Inspired by the region’s traditional hacienda style, Harris divided the contemporary residence into three separate veranda-fringed buildings that, along with a swimming pool, create a cozy compound. “There’s no enclosed connection between the buildings,” says Milder, “so moving between them forces an interaction with the outdoors year round.”

Architect Harris, an Accredited Professional in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) program of the U.S. Green Building Council, ensured that the home made minimal impact on its surroundings. Construction with high-thermal-value rammed earth and aerated autoclaved concrete (AAC) helps conserve energy. Rooms, windows and deep overhangs are oriented to provide shade during daytime’s hottest hours, plus natural ventilation.

Commonweal Conservancy, the local nonprofit that spearheads the development and aims to protect some 97 percent of the preserve’s 13,000 acres, provides owners with \$50,000 in rebates to help underwrite photovoltaic (PV) power systems for their homes. The 4.5-kilowatt-per-hour system the Milders installed provides almost all the power they need, from compact fluorescent lighting to satellite TV and Internet to a full complement of ENERGY STAR®-rated appliances. “We have a backup generator,” says Milder, “that we use probably eight hours a week when it isn’t sunny in December and January. But it’s sunny here about 320 days a year.”

Signer Harris Architects, 617-426-6200, signerharris.com

Galisteo Basin Preserve/Commonweal Conservancy, 505-982-0071, galisteobasinpreserve.com

PHOTOS BY KIRK GITTINGS



green details

THE PHOTOVOLTAIC PANEL ARRAY, programmed to track the sun’s motion, is situated a short stroll from the house. Marine-grade batteries in a utility room in one of the buildings store the energy.

COVERING THE SWIMMING POOL except when it’s being used minimizes evaporation: 90 to 95 percent less water is lost than if it were left uncovered.

LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS and other xeric (low-water desert) species in the home’s courtyard help keep water demands low in the arid region. Captured rainwater and recycled gray water irrigate all plants through a drip system.