

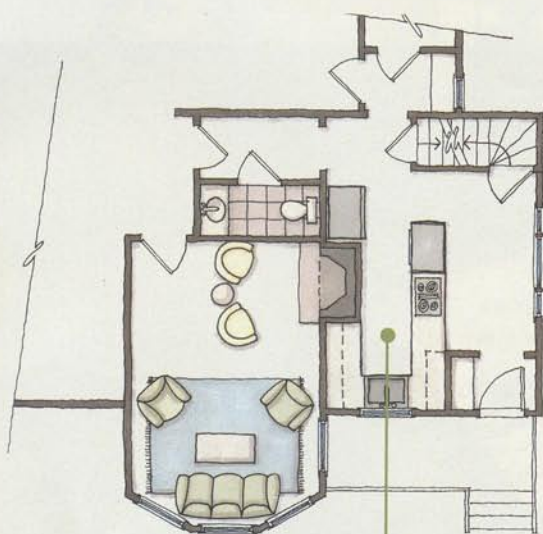


# COOKING UP AN ECO-FRIENDLY DESIGN

BY ROBERT BURGESS // PHOTO BY ERIC ROTH PHOTOGRAPHY

**W**hen people think of green building projects they may picture arrays of solar panels, perhaps wind turbines, contemporary architecture and an abundance of skylights.

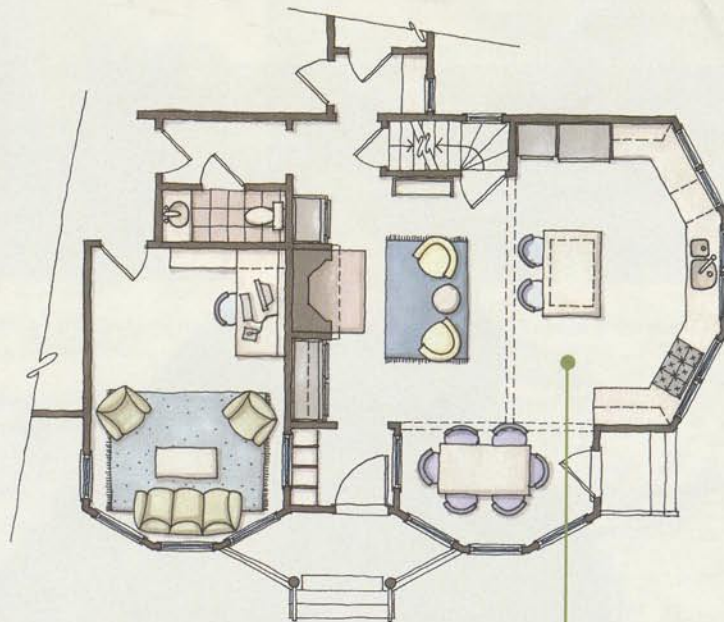
That may be why Thomas Buckborough, an Acton architect, doesn't hear from a lot of gung-ho environmentalists looking to build carbon-neutral homes from scratch. Most of his clients want to remodel, perhaps only one room, and most are thinking it isn't easy going green.



Renderings by Thomas Buckborough

### KITCHEN BEFORE

The existing kitchen in this 1880s formal Victorian in Lexington had a tiny galley kitchen and mudroom, inadequate for an active family. The dark, north-facing room was disconnected from the rest of the home in both style and flow.



### KITCHEN AFTER

The solution included an addition that tied into the existing geometry of the home. The north-facing room was bathed in light with transom windows and a skylight. The previously awkward fireplace was “flipped” around to be a centerpiece of the new room.

Buckborough — who has been designing and building for 21 years at Thomas Buckborough and Associates — works with clients to create a vision before any reconstruction takes place. If that vision ends up being seen through a partially eco-friendly filter, the green-certified professional is pleased to oblige.

“My mission is to have more everyday people consider these options,” he says. One Concord client sought a new kitchen to replace a space that was dreary and low in functionality. Buckborough discerned the client’s concern for healthy air quality and saw the project through that green lens.

Today the kitchen is the centerpiece to the home — most visitors enter through it. Its cork flooring is a sustainable product that also happens to be quite functional and attractive. Buckborough points out that it has more give than tile and is more affordable — plus glassware has a better chance of surviving a fall with cork.

A company that is certified in its environmental stewardship built the cabinets. There’s a coconut fiber floor mat. The quartz countertops are as

affordable, more abundant than granite and no less glamorous; they also don’t emit radon like their granite counterparts.

Even the paint fits the client’s concern for air quality. It’s clay-based, leaving out chemical residue. Buckborough said the special paint might have added \$100 to the project.

When a project is complete, it won’t necessarily feel eco-friendly. Some of it may indeed not be. And the bottom line won’t necessarily reflect a green surcharge, since many of the products Buckborough suggests cost minimally more.

“It can be stylish to be cost effective,” he says.

And this is what Buckborough emphasizes. He’ll only reveal his moral calling to protecting the environment if pressed.

“There seems like there’s less controversy over global warming,” said Buckborough, who drives a hybrid Ford Escape that is literally the color green. “There should be values with buying practices, which include energy conservation and thinking on a societal level.

And that ties in with what architects have been doing for centuries — trying to improve society.”

One thing is not negotiable when working with Buckborough. He insists that the project shine. He sees honor and art in his projects.

“I want to create uplifting spaces,” he says.

Buckborough enjoys the dialogue with clients. His new showroom in Acton features what he calls “This Green House” inside a remodeled 18th-century home. He wants customers to have a tactile experience, seeing different options up close: cork flooring, sea grass carpeting, bamboo cabinets, recycled glass and concrete countertops and efficient appliances.

The whole idea is to meld cutting edge technology with historic New England homes.

“That’s what makes it fun and rewarding,” he says. ■

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