

RENOVATION INSPIRATION



A MANHATTAN ARCHITECT'S HOME SERVES AS A SHOWCASE OF GREEN PRODUCTS

Less than 10 miles (16 km) away from the setting of the historic 1943 novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, architect Paul Gleicher and his wife Lisa Sharkey completely renovated their 19th century, 4-story Romanesque Revival brownstone. Remodeled with the help of *Good Housekeeping* magazine and the support of a number of building-product manufacturers, the Gleicher residence now is an inspiring green home located on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. • Although most homeowners can't command the budget or product placement opportunities of a Manhattan architect, there are important lessons learned from the renovation that can benefit every homeowner, regardless of budget.

VISION >> Sharkey and Gleicher started with a vision of transforming a multi-apartment tenement into a family-friendly home replete with green-building materials and furnishings. Their vision to go green was inspired by friends who had undergone a similar journey. As principal of New York-based Gleicher Design Group, Gleicher brought the necessary expertise and was aided by his firm's interior designer, David Barry.



GREEN TEAM



ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGN / GLEICHER DESIGN GROUP, NEW YORK, WWW.GLEICHERDESIGN.COM

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Sharkey provided the passion and drive to research the latest green products. With three children, the decision to create a light-filled, healthy home was an easy one. "My husband and I are concerned citizens, especially when it comes to the environment," Sharkey says. "We hope this house is not just a statement of our own personal space, but also an example so everyone can learn the benefits of eliminating toxins from their homes and conserving energy."

During the remodel, Sharkey and Gleicher discovered that green can mean many things. While some products use sustainable or recycled materials, these same products may be manufactured thousands of miles away. Is it better to select a locally produced product and reduce transportation impacts? This is just one question that arises when choosing products for any sustainable project.

Similar to many green homes, the materials in the Gleicher Residence that provide the greatest environmental benefit are almost invisible to the casual observer. The gas-fired boiler is 98 percent fuel efficient based on the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Department of Energy's Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency rating system. Windows and doors are thermally clad to prevent heat loss. Joists and other lumber are from small-diameter, fast-growing trees. Cabinets use formaldehyde-free particleboard. Insulation and tile work contain recycled materials.

The Sharkey and Gleicher team had the distinct advantage of working closely with building product manufacturers to reduce sourcing costs. *Good Housekeeping* helped secure partners for the project, which was later documented in a special supplement



circulated to 7 million subscribers. Although not every project can command such manufacturer attention, it never hurts to raise the issue, especially with smaller companies looking to gain exposure.

ENERGY AND WATER >> Sharkey and Gleicher's team installed a high-efficiency gas boiler and an indirect-fired hot-water heater to conserve energy. Panel and column radiators generate heat while saving space and boosting aesthetics. The team retrofitted the original fireplace with a ventilation insert to ensure an efficient and safe fireplace.

Low-E, argon-filled, thermally insulated wood-clad windows and doors reduce energy

consumption by cutting heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer. Energy Star-rated appliances, including the refrigerator, dishwasher, double-convection oven, warming drawer, gas stove, kitchen exhaust hood, microwave, and washer and gas dryer, also save a great deal of energy. Low-flow bathroom fixtures and toilets conserve water in the home.

WOOD AND TILE >> The wood products that make up the floor structure are manufactured from logs that are made into veneer or strands then bound together with an adhesive that contains no urea formaldehyde. Finished-wood flooring comes from planted hardwood forests that mature in 15

years rather than the typical 40 to 60 years required for other hardwoods. Other flooring areas use a limestone look-alike floor tiling that carries the European Union's Eco-label certification.

A low-emission particleboard with no added urea formaldehyde is used for the built-in closets. Kitchen cabinets, bookcases and bathroom vanities were manufactured with a formaldehyde-free adhesive and the cabinets themselves are finished with natural oils and low-VOC paint.

ROOFTOP GARDEN CONSERVATORY

>> Although Central Park is nearby, Sharkey and Gleicher opted to include a living roof and glass conservatory. The glazing on the conservatory

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has twice the insulating power of standard insulated glass and reduces relative heat gain, glare and UV damage. An Energy Star-rated skylight adorns the top of the structure.

The conservatory is surrounded by a living roof with green sedum plantings and black river stones. The roof materials, lifted by crane, were designed to lower air-conditioning costs, increase longevity of roof membranes and help manage storm-water runoff.

High-design green homes serve an important purpose. Just as Sharkey and Gleicher were inspired by a friend's experience going green, they hope their home can serve as a testament to what's possible in this new era of sustainably minded renovations. "What we're accomplishing is basically turning a destroyed piece of real estate into a model of how to go green," Gleicher says. "So many new technologies and options are now available without having to sacrifice style, quality or performance." 

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