

# building GREEN

Jennifer and Eric Engstrom purchased their 2,000 square-foot, two-story home in Shoreview in 1998. The home was built in 1978 and, until recently, the only updates they've needed to make have been either cosmetic—new colors or new furniture—or in the form of replacement appliances. Ultimately, a failing refrigerator actually drove the Engstrom's decision to remodel their kitchen.

"Our refrigerator/freezer was freezing the eggs and melting the ice cream," Jennifer laughs. "Its 14 cubic foot capacity was just too small for our family."

There were, however, cabinets built around it which prevented them from just being able to replace it with a larger unit. So when faced with the option of just removing the surrounding cabinets to install a larger refrigerator or having the chance to improve the entire kitchen, they choose to remodel.

The original kitchen had other problems the Engstroms felt could be fixed by remodeling the entire space. One was a drop ceiling that made the kitchen's ceiling height only seven feet. For a family of "six-footers," that made

things a little cramped. The second was that the kitchen felt very closed in due to a lack of natural light in the space.

"Between the kitchen and the eat-in area there were cabinets hanging down from the ceiling over the kitchen counter," says Jennifer. "Combined with there being a lot of shade in the backyard, we just didn't get a lot of natural light in the room."

"We liked the neighborhood and rest of the house, and didn't want to move," she says, "so the kitchen remodel was logical."



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF: HOUSE OF DREAMS DESIGN/BUILD

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## A GREEN LIFESTYLE

Jennifer and Eric believe in taking care of the environment. From driving fuel efficient vehicles to using energy efficient appliances, they've always tried to do their part to conserve our natural resources.

"We always try to reuse or recycle household items," says Jennifer. "If we can't use it ourselves, we always try to find a home for it."

So once they decided to remodel their kitchen, the use of the latest green building techniques made perfect sense.

The Engstroms took their project to House of Dreams Design/Build in Shoreview, one of the Twin Cities leading proponents of green building techniques. Only the second remodeling team in Minnesota to enroll in the Green Built Home program (see sidebar), Cindy Ojczyk of Cindy Ojczyk Design, interior designer and green

building consultant, and Adam Tills, designer and project manager of House of Dreams, worked with the Engstroms to incorporate energy efficient windows, ENERGY STAR qualified appliances, a high efficiency furnace and air conditioner, semi-custom cabinetry made from domestically grown wood manufactured within 300 miles of installation, formaldehyde-free insulation, and natural linoleum flooring.

Additionally, job site waste materials were recycled, the old cabinets were reused, the appliances were donated, and measures were taken during construction to protect the owners' health by separating construction areas from non-construction areas.

"To qualify for certification under the Green Built Home standards, a home needs to acquire 10 points for using various green techniques," says Adam

Tills. "The Engstrom's project scored 28 points under the program, becoming the first-ever certified Green Built Home in the state of Minnesota."

## SCOPE OF THE REMODEL

The original kitchen area contained the working kitchen and eat-in area divided by a U-shaped counter and a dining room off that area. The remodel widened it by approximately four feet, which eliminated the eat-in area but increased the work area in the kitchen. A higher countertop on one side provides stool seating.

A new sink and new Corian countertops were installed to help create an elegant look. While Corian products are petroleum based, they do get points for green building.

"Corian countertops have a long life and are completely renewable

## About Green Built Home

*Green Built Home™ is a voluntary building initiative that reviews and certifies homes that meet sustainable building and energy standards. The program is implemented in partnership with the Madison (WI) Area Builders Association in cooperation with other participating builders associations, leading utilities and organizations that promote green building.*

*There are approximately 40 regional green programs in existence nationwide. Founded in 1999, Green Built Home is the only green building program in the upper Midwest. As a product of a non-profit organization, Green Built Home provides neutral third party certification of green building practices that meet meaningful environmental, health and energy standards. For more information, visit [www.greenbulthome.org](http://www.greenbulthome.org).*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF: HOUSE OF DREAMS DESIGN/BUILD



should they get a scratch,” says Jennifer. “In addition, you can always cut them out and use them in other areas of your home,” she says.

New custom cabinets made from domestic Adler hang from a new eight foot high ceiling, opening up the space and letting in considerably more natural light. A larger kitchen window also brightens up the space.

Originally there was a sliding glass door in the eating area, now a single French door with a double hung window leads occupants out to a screen porch.

The existing appliances were donated. The existing dishwasher remained. Of course, a new 25 cubic foot refrigerator/freezer is the centerpiece of attention when it comes to the appliances.

This high-design remodel has sev-

eral other neat features as well, including a retractable downdraft that eliminates the need for a range hood; under-cabinet electrical sockets to aid a clean, sleek look; a tech cabinet that hides phones, cell phone chargers, and other cords; and Corian electrical covers that match the backsplash on what few visible sockets remain.

The remodel also included the front entry and a small first floor bath.

A new all glass front door with glass sidelights brightens up the entry and the hallway leading into the kitchen. Visitors pass a totally renovated half bath on the way, complete with new toilet, sink, fixtures and paint.

Finally, “green” paint was used throughout the remodel and the flooring is a natural product with no petroleum in it.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

Importantly, green building doesn't take any longer than any other type of construction. The Engstroms started their project on Labor Day weekend 2005 and the family ate Christmas dinner in the kitchen.

### *Sources for this article:*

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