





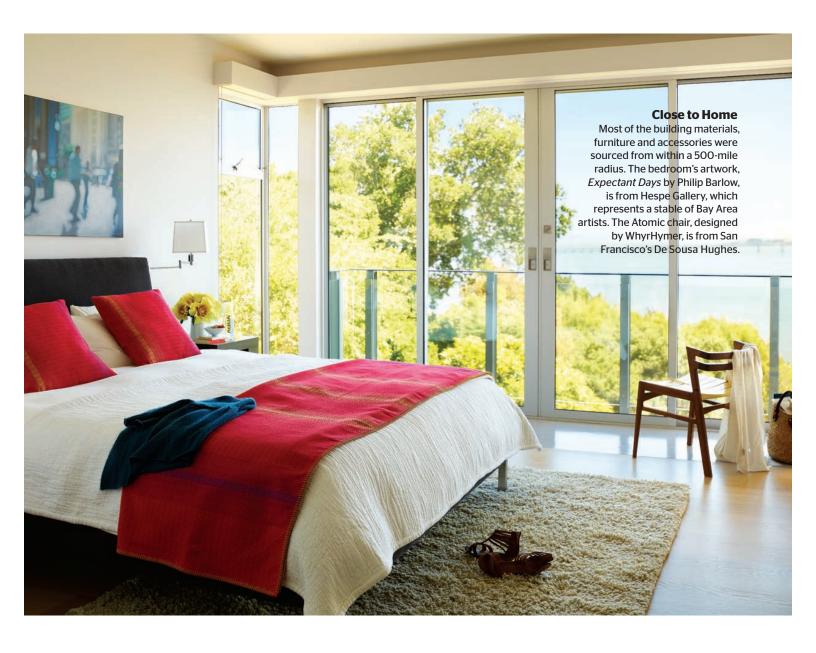
sually a client will tell architect Lewis Butler that they want to build a LEED-certified home and then quietly fade into the background, letting Butler run with the ball. Helene Marsh was not the typical client. Butler, principal of Butler Armsden Architects, says that Marsh was so well versed in sustainable design that it made sense for her to take the lead on the project. "She wanted to use us for our architectural expertise," says Butler. "She ran the hard science and physics angles, and it was our goal to incorporate them and make them beautiful."

Marsh traces her initial interest in environmental stewardship to her experiences living in Prague in the 1990s. She moved to the Czech Republic in early 1990—only three months after the Velvet Revolution

and the fall of Soviet control—just as rapid industrial development was wreaking havoc on the local ecology. "I remember going cross-country skiing and where there should have been a lush forest, there were only these sickly looking two-foot-high trees. They looked as if they had been burned," says Marsh. "It was due to the acid rain. Even the countryside was covered in soot and filth."

In 1997, Marsh moved to Southern California, and in 2001, she enrolled in a master's program at UC Santa Barbara's Bren School of Environmental Science & Management. She took an elective in green building design, knowing that one day, if afforded the opportunity, she would build her own green home.

But to call the home that Marsh built in Tiburon more than 10 years later "green" would be a severe



understatement. If a brand-new category of LEED Titanium were ever established, Marsh's residence would set the standard. For now, the home settles for the current highest rating of LEED Platinum (the designation requires a score of 92 points; that's 22 points lower than the 114 points earned by Marsh's property).

In 2007, Marsh moved to Marin County with her partner, Don Love, and her two daughters. They immediately began searching for the perfect site for their home—not an easy task for someone with big plans to make the smallest possible impact. Marsh rejected any location that would have required destroying a house of architectural significance or taking down a large home. (Either choice would have created extra waste and left behind a massive carbon footprint.) The site they finally selected proved ideal: Bay views, sunny exposure and an elevated northeast orientation perfect for passive cooling from Bay breezes. It also had an existing structure (a modest 1940s ranch house) begging to be replaced.

Butler admits that there was no grand architectural concept going into the project: "The house was built for this site; the realities of the property dictated the design." And although Marsh appreciates the clean and unfussy form, to her the house is an efficiently functioning machine, one the whole family can operate. Her two daughters, Natasha, 16, and Alexandria, 14, know how to read the collection of gauges and meters along the side of the house and like to monitor their own water and energy consumption. "They both take very short showers," says Marsh. For two teenage girls, that just might be Earth changing.

