

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

# Coastal

SAN DIEGO HOMES

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Designer creates comfortable home on  
challenging lot with spectacular views

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2011



# GREEN NEXUS

CLUSTER OF ENCINITAS HOMES TAKES ECO-LIVING TO NEW HEIGHTS

**SOPHY CHAFFEE**  
SPECIAL TO THE U-T

**T**he view from the rooftop deck of Neptune Norte, a custom home under construction in Encinitas, is truly unparalleled.

With a sightline at the pelican flight line, the two-story structure on the east side of Neptune Avenue, offers a view from La Jolla to Orange County.

What you see on the rooftop is also unusual: Toward the back on the south side are frames for 26 photovoltaic solar panels that are expected to generate 55 percent of the home's energy. And along the perimeter are beds of dymondia, senecio and agave that complement the home's modern

style and, at the same time, reduce storm-water runoff, create insulation and improve air quality.

But what makes this vantage point even more remarkable is that it's in the middle of "Neptune Nexus," a cluster of five luxury custom homes that have been built or are registered to be built to the rigorous Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum standards, the highest certification given by the U.S. Green Building Council.

"LEED Platinum homes are spotted here and there, but there's nothing like what's here in Encinitas," said Rich Williams, president of ArtHaus,

SEE **ENCINITAS • 11**



The ipe decking and western red cedar siding of "ArtHaus 2" (top) are sustainably forested, as is the orosi flooring in the main living area (above).  
BRENT HAYWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

# Encinitas

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a residential development company. Williams is the builder for two of the homes and a LEED consultant for all five projects, which are eight lots apart from each other along Neptune Avenue.

One house in the nexus is already Platinum-certified, one of only 3,100 in the United States. The other four (which are under construction or have plans to break ground by next year) have registered their intent to achieve the standard with the Green Building Council.

To reach Platinum status, each project must receive 80 or more credits out of a possible 100 (verified by a third party) in categories that include sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, innovation in design and indoor environmental quality.

A cluster of so many registered LEED Platinum homes, which are not part of a subdivision, is rare. This nexus is part



**Senecio is part of the vegetated rooftop deck of Neptune Norte in Encinitas. Rainwater-fed vegetated roofs increase energy efficiency, improve air quality and filter storm-water runoff.**

**EARNIE GRAFTON • U-T**

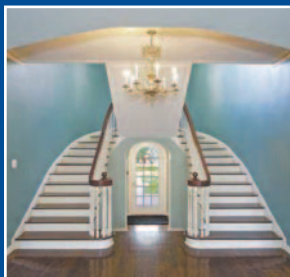
coincidence and part an outgrowth of the eco-ethos of Encinitas, which Neptune Norte builder Jeff Adams likens to Marin County.

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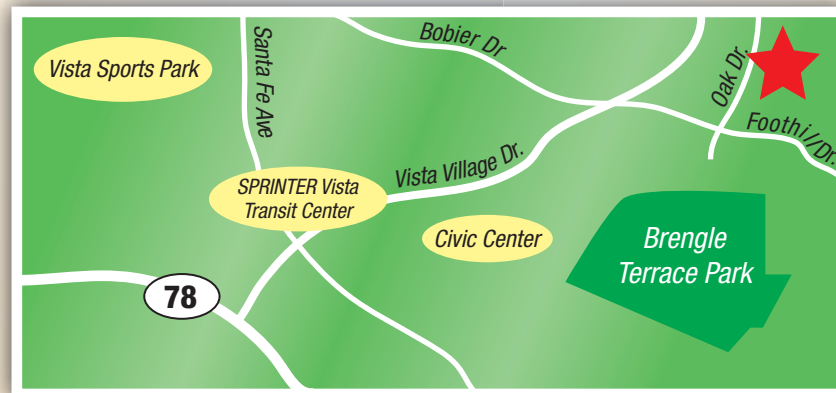
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# Encinitas

CONTINUED FROM 11

It also makes business sense. Certification differentiates custom homes in a tight market, meeting clients' demands for more durable and healthier homes. It also capitalizes on the city's green-building incentives while meeting new state green-building codes.

"It may be the perfect storm," Williams said.

The spec home he built last year, dubbed "ArtHaus 2," is three roofs down from Neptune Norte. The 2,229-square-foot home is the second residence in San Diego County awarded LEED Platinum status (the first residence is in La Jolla) and boasts expected savings above California standards: 45 percent in energy and 80 percent in water.

With solar panels, water-and energy-saving appliances and fixtures, sustainable wood flooring and framing, high-efficiency windows and drought-tolerant landscaping, the home has the green features you would expect in a LEED home. But to achieve and go beyond the Platinum standard, Williams used non-toxic building materials and finishes, sophisticated water and air-filtration systems, and a "smart skylight" to automatically bring in fresh air. "Indoor air quality is the most important thing," he said, noting that the indoor air of the average U.S. home is 10 to 20 times more polluted than the air outside.

The three-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bathroom home, which is for sale, has a



**The rooftop deck of Neptune Norte (above) is right in the middle of the nexus of green buildings on Neptune Avenue in the Leucadia section of Encinitas. The city is encouraging more LEED projects like these by offering priority plan checks and financial incentives. EARNIE GRAFTON • U-T**

modern style with a clean, mid-century vibe that Williams predicts will not require frequent updating.

The reverse floor plan makes the Pacific view accessible from the deck and the open living, dining and kitchen space on the second floor. The bedrooms are on the first floor.

Next year, Williams is planning to start on ArtHaus 3, a 2,609-square-foot spec home on the lot behind ArtHaus 2. The modern-design plans call for it to be a net-zero energy home, one that produces as much energy as it consumes. Among the green elements planned for the four-bedroom, three-

and-a-half-bathroom home are a rain-water catchment system and Structural Insulated Panel (SIP) construction. (SIPs are usually made by sandwiching foam insulation between sheathing of thin pressed wood.)

SEE **ENCINITAS • 13**



**Sustainably forested maple cabinets with teak veneer, Caesarstone engineered quartz countertops and low-flow faucets and showerheads are featured in the "ArtHaus2" bathroom (far left). Part of the staircase (left) is made of recycled-content steel and concrete. BRENT HAYWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY**

# Encinitas

CONTINUED FROM 12

The exterior of Neptune Norte is also modern, but the interior will have a Pacific Rim feel when it's finished next month, said Adams, principal of Wave Crest General Contracting of Encinitas. The 4,533-square-foot home includes a basement garage, first-floor bedrooms, and open living, dining and kitchen area (with elevator) on the second floor, as well as a guest house. Three decks and other overhangs help achieve passive solar energy savings that Adams said "lets the winter sun in and keeps the summer sun out."

Other features that Adams hopes will push the project to Platinum status include a 1,700-gallon rainwater cistern, fruit grove and organic garden, insulation that "tightens the envelope" by keeping energy from escaping and sophisticated systems for superior indoor air quality.

The style of the custom Platinum home that Adams plans to build on the adjoining lot next year is quite different. North



**The drought-tolerant landscaping and entry stairs of "ArtHaus2" are designed to direct storm water to infiltration basins, which reduces storm-water runoff to the nearby Pacific Ocean. BRENT HAYWOOD PHOTOGRAPHY**

Neptune Beach Cottages will have a cottage/bungalow design in both the 2,600-square-foot main house and 700-square-foot rental/granny flat unit. Adams is also going for a net-zero-energy home for his client and hopes to use SIPs, vegetated

roofing and a solar chimney (which uses passive solar energy to create convection and improve natural ventilation).

Across the street and slightly north of the Wave Crest projects is a bluff-top home that will be remodeled next year.

Named Neptunaterra when completed, the two-story modern house will have organic gardens, a tilapia pond and a glass-bottom whirlpool spa on a rooftop terrace above the kitchen. The green goals of the homeowners are big: a house that will enable them to live off the grid in terms of energy and food production for five days, according to project architect Jack Smyer.

All his clients may not go to the same lengths as Neptunaterra's, but Smyer predicts more will opt for LEED Platinum homes. "I know a lot of my clients were influenced by their children, what they were exposed to in school about taking care of our Mother Earth."

Williams sees another force behind the Neptune Nexus: the spirit of innovation in the community that drove local surf industry entrepreneurs.

"We are pioneers here, transforming a neighborhood to be an example for how our homes should really be built," he said.

Sophy Chaffee is a freelance writer based in Encinitas.

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SAN DIEGO HOMES

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