



NATURAL FIT

HOMES TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PASSIVE ENERGY AND VIEW

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SPECIAL TO THE U-T

I grew up in La Jolla since I was 5, and I've never seen a house like it," said Andy Crane of the Pacific Beach house he shares with two roommates.

The 2,000-square-foot, three-bedroom, three-bath house – one of three nearly identical homes built in 2005 by architect Simi Razavian – measures only 19 feet in width and 90 feet in length. But despite its long, narrow structure and close proximity to its matching neighbors, it feels open and private.

"I really like how the house feels, like it has different environments," said Crane, a part-time law student and director of business development for the Desert Hearts Festival. "The deck feels like a jungle, and the

rooftop like the desert. And inside, you're in the middle of the city, but you're surrounded by greenery."

The house faces south with a view of Mission Bay. The tropical ambiance on the first-floor deck in front of the living room comes from the combination of palms in the front yard and views of the water. The building's earth tones, flat roof and pueblo-like style give the rooftop deck of the two-story building the desert feel. But the 360-degree view is strictly San Diego.

Razavian, principle at MSA Home, said she always tries to build houses that face south. "The south sun comes in the house during winter," she said. "The stone captures the heat and it radiates at night."

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Architect Simi Razavian tore down a large, rundown house to build three nearly identical homes that fit with the style of the neighborhood. JIM BRADY PHOTOS



Pacific Beach

CONTINUED FROM 27

To that end, the house has travertine tiles throughout the open lower floor, from the living room at the front of the house past the dining area and into the kitchen. A big sliding glass door that opens to the deck allows for plenty of sunshine. She said radiant heat can warm up the house as much as 20 degrees at night.

Not only does the travertine floor absorb heat and feel cool in summer, but it also “looks nice and doesn’t show dirt,” Razavian said. Inlaid pieces of black galaxy granite, which match the kitchen island, break up the long, narrow floor space.

Overhangs, made from wood slats, are angled to keep the summer sun out. Although the house has air conditioning, Crane said it’s rarely needed. Every room has operable windows on at least two sides for cross-ventilation. The breeze and ceiling fans, if needed, keep summer temperatures pleasant.

Razavian, a native of Iran,



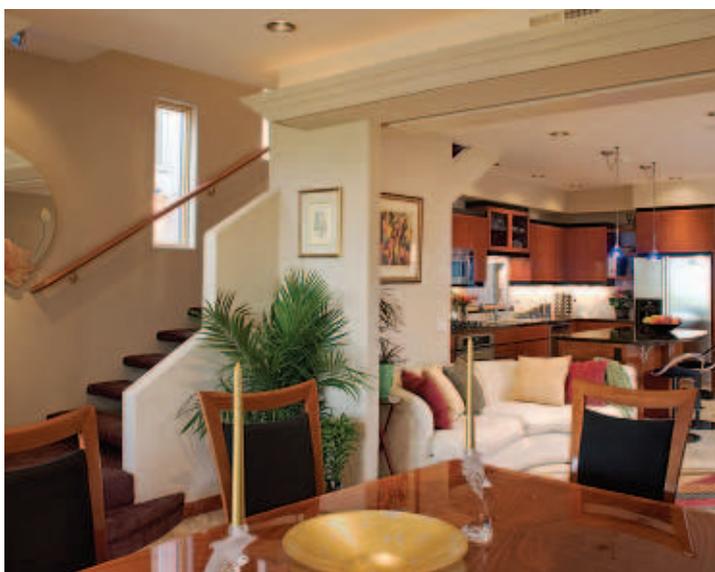
Sightlines are directed toward the view of Mission Bay from the second-floor master bedroom to the kitchen, which has views to the front of the home through the open stairs. JIM BRADY PHOTOS

has studied passive energy usage in ancient Middle Eastern architecture. Using natural elements not only saves money, but also provides a healthier environment, she said.

Inside the home, banks of windows in different shapes and sizes bring in natural light and add geometric interest to the home. Hedges on both sides of the house provide privacy and a green vista. Nighttime lighting comes in layers, from cove lighting in the living room and pendant lighting over the kitchen island to direct overhead lights.

A gas fireplace provides a focal point in the living room next to the sliding glass door that leads to the deck, while the kitchen island is the gathering spot toward the back of the house.

Sightlines are all directed to the front of the home – even from the kitchen sink, which is behind the stairs leading to the second-floor bedrooms. Razavi-an designed the stairs without



Architectural details, such as soffits in the living room and a partial wall that could hold pocket doors, add interest to the long narrow space while keeping it open. JIM BRADY

risers to create a view through the stairs and a side window by the front door.

“It also makes you feel safe,” she

said, because you can see who is at the front door even when you’re in the back of the house.

A partial wall divides the liv-

ing/dining area and the kitchen area. Not only does it add architectural interest, but it also provides an option for a pocket door, Razavian said.

The open area at the top of the stairs is designed as a space for an office. “I didn’t want it to be just a hallway,” she said.

Thoughtful design decisions such as this one, as well as details such as the wall niches in the stairwell, make the home feel spacious, whether it’s for a single family or three roommates.

“Everything makes sense and it flows,” said Lisa Lee, a registered nurse and Crane’s next-door neighbor. “There are no bad spaces here.”

An added bonus: “The three homes have created their own community,” Crane said. “We bring each other soup when we’re sick.”

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