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Jeremy Richardson, sitting next to a salvaged metal railing in his Petworth condo, sought out a home that incorporated eco-friendly features and sustainable design.

Revel In the (Green) Details

Recycled materials give
homes eco-friendly style

Decor

For Jeremy Richardson, there's not much separation between work and home. As a contractor at the Department of Energy's Building Technologies Program (whose mission is to make buildings more energy-efficient), it's practically a job requirement for Richardson to have a sustainable apartment.

"The chance to live in a more energy-efficient space is one of the things that drove me" to move, says Richardson, 36, who moved into a condo containing repurposed materials in Petworth's Solidago building in March. "It's a passion of mine to live in ways that are gentler on the planet."

Built in 1917 with two units, the Solidago was renovated over the past two years to hold three condos. Half of the construction waste was recycled, saving 7 tons from becoming landfill fodder. The building earned a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) platinum certification, the highest level of eco-friendliness recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council.

While LEED certification is an assurance that a home is gentle on the Earth, not all green elements of a home are so subtle (or official). Recycled and sustainable décor often comes in eye-catching, conversation-starting forms, and it's become a trend as both a design element and a selling point.

CONTINUED ON **E2**

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The countertops inside the Bellaman family's new home in Kensington are made from recycled beer and soda bottles. The surface acts like granite but sparkles in sunlight.

Sustainable Style

Continued from page E1

The economy has contributed to the demand for salvaged, energy-efficient design elements, says Tim Campbell, a product manager at Metropolitan Regional Information Systems (MRIS.com), which runs the country's largest real estate listing service and monitors market trends. Recently, he says, "everybody's much more conscious of their energy bills and of their footprint on the environment."

Nadia Subaran, senior designer, co-founder and co-owner of Aidan Design architecture firm (4701 Sangamore Road, Suite 3, Bethesda; 301-320-8735, Aidandesign.com), would agree. Adding green materials to the home is "a part of every client conversation I have [now], whereas five years ago, it was maybe one in 10," she says. "I think it's due to greater social awareness. People are much more conscious of the choices they make. I think that everybody feels that they have, in their own small way, a power to influence or to affect by their choices."

There's not much data on the effect of eco-friendly features on overall home values, largely because green technologies continue to evolve. However, houses with perks such as LEED certification, recycled design elements and Energy Star appliances tend to sell for more money than non-green homes, according to a 2009 study by the Earth Advantage

Institute of homes in Portland, Ore. Eco-friendly homes also spend about 10 fewer days on the market, according to Campbell.

It all comes down to basic supply-and-demand economics, Campbell says. As consumers become more interested in preserving the planet through their property choices, "builders start building homes and communities using those green features, and using them as selling points for their marketing."

Bethesda-based Rill Architects (4833 Rugby Avenue, Suite 501; 301-656-4166, Rillarchitects.com) exemplifies this trend. "Our real

Green Guidance

How to LEED By Example

A Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification means that the U.S. Green Building Council (Usgbc.org) has vetted a property based on nine measures of eco-friendliness, including building design, construction, materials and energy efficiency. There are four levels of LEED certification—certified, silver, gold and platinum—based on a point system of up to 100 for the nine areas. Points are awarded for how certain features will help the environment, especially when it comes to energy efficiency and carbon dioxide reductions. S.K.

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interest in recycled materials has always been based on our clients' wishes," says Jim Rill, principal and owner of the company.

Rill and his team recently worked on a house in Kensington, Md., installing additions that helped it earn a LEED gold certification. In the kitchen, they installed tan countertops made of recycled beer and soda bottles. When light hits the counters, they project a glittery sheen. The innovative touch became a focal point.

"The countertops are vibrant. They're not calm," Rill says. "They act like granite or Corian. They are a little more expensive [than actual granite], believe it or not. You have to really be enthusiastic about it to do it."

Michael Bellaman and his family of five — who will soon move into the Kensington home from Chicago — were. The Bellamans wanted

their new place to meet three criteria: the right price, the right neighborhood and the right level of environmental friendliness.

"I think a lot of houses will dabble with some components, but this house has really taken ... advantage of the eco-friendly opportunities, and I think it's done in a very nice way," says Bellaman, the president and CEO of Associated Builders and Contractors.

In the Bellamans' basement, Rill put down cork flooring. "Cork and bamboo grow so fast" that they're more readily replenishable in the environment than regular hardwood, Rill says. Cork is also a softer surface for tired feet — and dropped breakables — and it doesn't trap all the dirt that carpet attracts.

Cork costs about the same as standard wood flooring, Rill says. But overall, the prices of environ-

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It's What's Inside That Counts

OK, so maybe your place isn't LEED platinum-certified. Consider sprucing up your look with some eco-friendly décor. Bonus: Minimize your carbon footprint by shopping for the goods locally.



1 The recycled bicycle chain frames at Bambeco (\$38-\$39; 3430 Second St., Suite 100, Baltimore; 866-535-4144, Bambeco.com) link edgy style with eco-smarts. 2 Homebody (715 Eighth St. SE; 202-544-8445, Homebodydc.com) sells area rugs (\$40-\$130) made from recycled woven plastic. 3 The Seedling Pillow by Inhabit at Tabletop DC (\$64; 1608 20th St. NW; 202-387-7117, Tabletopdc.com) is made from 100 percent recycled polyester. 4 With a certified sustainable kiln-dried hardwood frame and a soy-based polyfoam bench seat, the Scarlet Chaise from Crate and Barrel (\$1,199; Crateandbarrel.com) comes in five colors. s.k.

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Sustainable Style

Continued from page E3

mentally friendly features vary wildly.

To keep financial and environmental costs down when she redid the kitchen in her Chevy Chase house, Cara Medeiros asked Aidan Design to salvage as much of the existing materials in the room as possible. She'd had the kitchen renovated five years ago, but the cabinetry didn't hold up well, so she wanted to redo much of it.

"The island is new cabinetry, but we were able to save the walnut top" from Medeiros' original kitchen, Aidan Design's Subaran says. "All of the cabinetry hardware was reused, but the tile work was all new and the floors were refinished."



The metal railing in Jeremy Richardson's condo was originally a grate at the Swiss Embassy. Now, it serves as a one-of-a-kind divider between the stairs and living room.

"It's rewarding to touch something that's real, that's been used before, even in the most mundane of ways."

— TANYA TOPOLEWSKI, PRINCIPAL OF DEVELOPMENT COMPANY TRUE TURTLE, ON THE SALVAGED RAILING SHE INSTALLED IN JEREMY RICHARDSON'S CONDO, ABOVE

Medeiros, 42, a stay-at-home mom of two, says the result is a timeless, classic look. "Reusing anything is always the way to go," she says. "For me, things with a little age have a little more character and make it more interesting."

For many of Rill's clients, the benefits of green materials and furnishings are a rewarding bonus, if not the impetus for installing them. "I'd love to say it's because everybody cares about the environment. I think it's more along the line of they like the materials," Rill says. "It's fun. It's playful."

That's probably true of the salvaged railing in Richardson's Solidago condo, too. The fixture separating the stairwell and living room was once a grate covering a pit at the Embassy of Switzerland. Now, it's a striking element of his décor.

"I was looking for something that was unique to put there because it's such a high sight-value location. It's the first thing you see when you walk into the apartment," says Tanya Topolewski, principal of True Turtle (808 Aspen St. NW; 202-550-3671, Trueturtle.com), a D.C.-based company focused on sustainable development. Topolewski bought the weathered black metal railing at D.C.'s Brass Knob (Thebrassknob.com) antiques shop for \$150 and added it to Richardson's condo.

"It's really textural," Topolewski says of the railing. "People want to touch it. It's rewarding to touch something that's real, that's been used before, even in the most mundane of ways. It wasn't fabricated to look old. It is old."

STEPHANIE KANOWITZ

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