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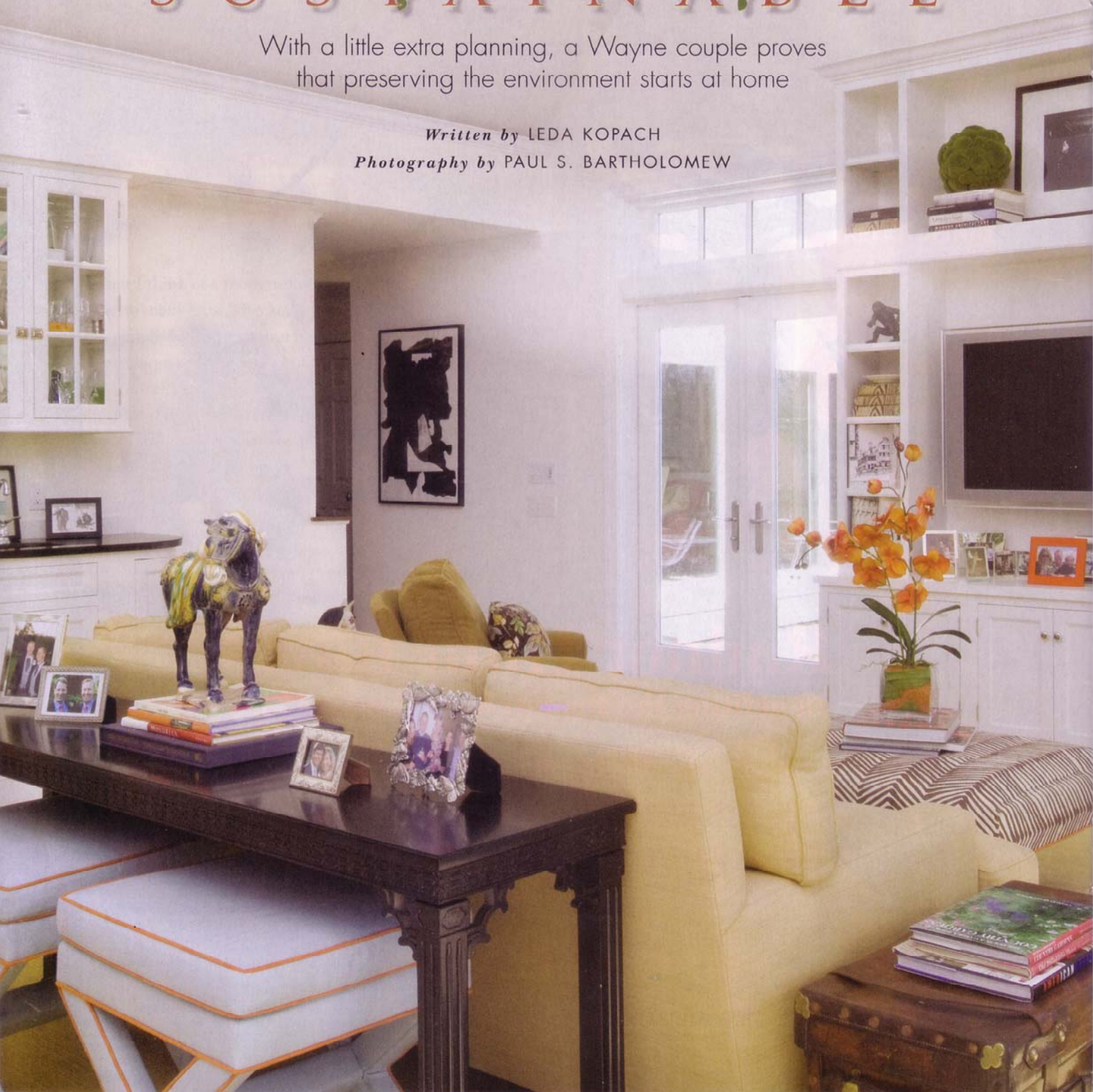
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Stylishly SUSTAINABLE

With a little extra planning, a Wayne couple proves
that preserving the environment starts at home

Written by LEDA KOPACH

Photography by PAUL S. BARTHOLOMEW





Stark white walls in the great room are warmed with lively tangerine accents.

Like many young professionals, Charlie and Cynthia Szoradi, a green architect and a realtor, respectively, moved from Philadelphia to the 'burbs when they were ready to start a family. They set their sights on a modest, 1,800-square-foot, mid-century ranch home, a humble dwelling in Wayne that lacked "dream home" status but seemed a good starting point for a sensible and sustainable transformation. Their goal was to build an environmentally friendly, energy-efficient home suited to raising a family and entertaining friends while pleasing Mother Nature.

They had a general plan for the home when they purchased it in 2004 but waited a full year to begin work so they could settle in through each of the seasons and observe how sunlight and wind would impact the home and their proposed renovations. Charlie used his observations and calculations to determine the roof's pitch, the location of the all-important solar panels and the placement of the windows and doors for optimum light and cross-ventilation — important considerations for sticky, Philadelphia summers.

"It's like being a farmer," Charlie explains. "A farmer doesn't need an architect to tell him the best place to build his farm. He has to experience it. It's an organic process."

His basic plan added 2,700 square feet of living space, including a great room, an office for Cynthia, a master suite and a second level with two bedrooms.

"Greening" the home was the ultimate goal, but making it stylish and functional was also a priority. "All my decisions had to be approved by Cynthia who, in a sense, was my client," Charlie says. "Renovations couldn't just be environmentally beneficial; they also had to be aesthetically pleasing. For example, while the paint we used has zero VOC (volatile organic compounds), it also had to be durable and have a great color palette. And the bamboo floors in the office also passed Cynthia's test because they are beautiful and sustainable and cost only about 75 percent of the price of hardwoods."

Many of the rooms have visual and environmental impact, but the expansive great room with 20-foot ceilings and cool, white shades is the heart of the Szoradi home. "Americans think of a 'great room' as a new concept," Charlie notes. "But it's actually an old one. Hundreds of years ago in Europe and Asia the family was always in the same room together, gathered around the hearth, sharing food. We just took it to the extreme. We can cook and watch television. Our son, Calvin, can play, and with our wet bar and large island area, it's a great place to have a party. We spend the majority of our time in there."



Extra-tall white cabinetry, honed black granite countertops and a mirrored backsplash help establish the kitchen's contemporary feel.

RIGHT Inspired by a trip to Nantucket, an efficient home office framed in cobalt blue contains sustainable bamboo flooring and a view of the front yard.

In the spacious kitchen area, extra-high cabinetry provides ample storage. Striking black granite countertops, honed to remove shine, add sharp visual contrast while providing plenty of room for meal preparations. The mirrored backsplash adds depth to the bright, airy area, and tangerine and lime accents warm the space while delivering a modern vibe. On the opposite end of the room, the wet bar and comfortable seating area highlighted by a whimsical, espresso zebra print ottoman makes entertaining and relaxing easy.

Energy-efficient features include a roofing system with solar panels that help heat the home and water, low-emissive windows and double-thick walls for extra insulation and radiant heated tile flooring for year-round warmth. Energy Star appliances add to the cost savings.

Two sets of French doors lead to the 600-square-foot flagstone terrace replete with three seating areas, a barbecue area and a fire pit, all offering year-round enjoyment. The expansive yard contains the majority of the 300 trees Charlie planted on the property to reduce winds in the winter and help keep the home cool in the summer.



One of Charlie's favorite energy savers is a less visible improvement — a tankless hot water heater. Prevalent in Europe and Asia, this type of heater is slowly gaining momentum in the United States, Charlie notes. "You wouldn't boil water all day long if you like to eat pasta," he says. "Traditional water heaters are simply not efficient."

Other energy-efficient updates throughout the house include programmable thermostats, warm fluorescent lighting and double-flush toilets, as well as solar tubes and interior, frosted glass doors, both of which allow light to pass into darker areas to reduce the need for overhead lights.

On the cosmetic side of things, new furnishings are interspersed with antiques or items that have been repurposed and given new life. Cynthia oversaw the design of the home, and local interior designer Mona Ross Berman helped articulate her vision. Cool color palettes reign in the great room, Cynthia's cobalt blue office and the powder blue master suite, but the Szoradis deliberately chose warm tones for the rooms that were original to the home and centrally located.



A partial exterior view of the 5,000-square-foot home showcases unobtrusive, energy-efficient solar panels.

BELOW The second floor addition accommodates a stylish boy's suite while eliminating the commonly wasted eaves space. Bright furnishings include a rummage sale wingback chair reupholstered in scrap fabric.







Powder blue tones in the master bedroom have both feminine and masculine appeal.

OPPOSITE Funky, zebra print walls in blue add an element of surprise to the hall bath. The interior door's frosty, opaque glass allows light to filter into the windowless room from the adjacent office.

The chocolate dining room, crimson red den and living room furniture awash in the colors of a garden — soft pinks and chartreuses — were meant to feel warm and intimate, in contrast to the stark styling of other rooms that retain their hardwood floors and remain largely unchanged.


"Becoming energy efficient is not a call to rip everything out in your home and start anew," Charlie says. "That doesn't make environmental sense. Anything that we found on the property was evaluated and reused if possible. We don't waste anything."

Old doors were repurposed to create storage cabinets in the mudroom, for instance, and a wingback chair in Calvin's delightful blue and orange room was found in a church rummage sale and reupholstered with scrap fabric for a fun accent.

For the master suite, Charlie and Cynthia chose a soft, powder blue palette with darker blue and chocolate accents. The bed's headboard, upholstered in a soft fabric to please Cynthia's feminine side, includes metal grommets that appease Charlie's love of contemporary and masculine furnishings.

Extra thick, double-lined window treatments add beauty, privacy and, of course, energy efficiency. The serene, spacious master bath contains his-and-her walk-in closets, a marble vanity with dual sinks, a soaking tub and a separate glass-enclosed shower with a radiant heated floor.

The second floor addition's soaring, angled ceilings add visual interest to the space, putting to use the commonly wasted space of the eaves. In addition to the boy-friendly suite styled in orange and blue, a second, more femininely styled guest room, awash in pistachio, completes the second floor.

"All our renovations had to do with our lifestyle, and they had to be functional and good for the environment," Charlie concludes. "'Green' is the new red, white and blue, and we all benefit as Americans and world citizens to take care of our environment." 

Charlie Szoradi documents some of the green technologies implemented in his own home (and others) on his Web site at www.greenandsave.com.