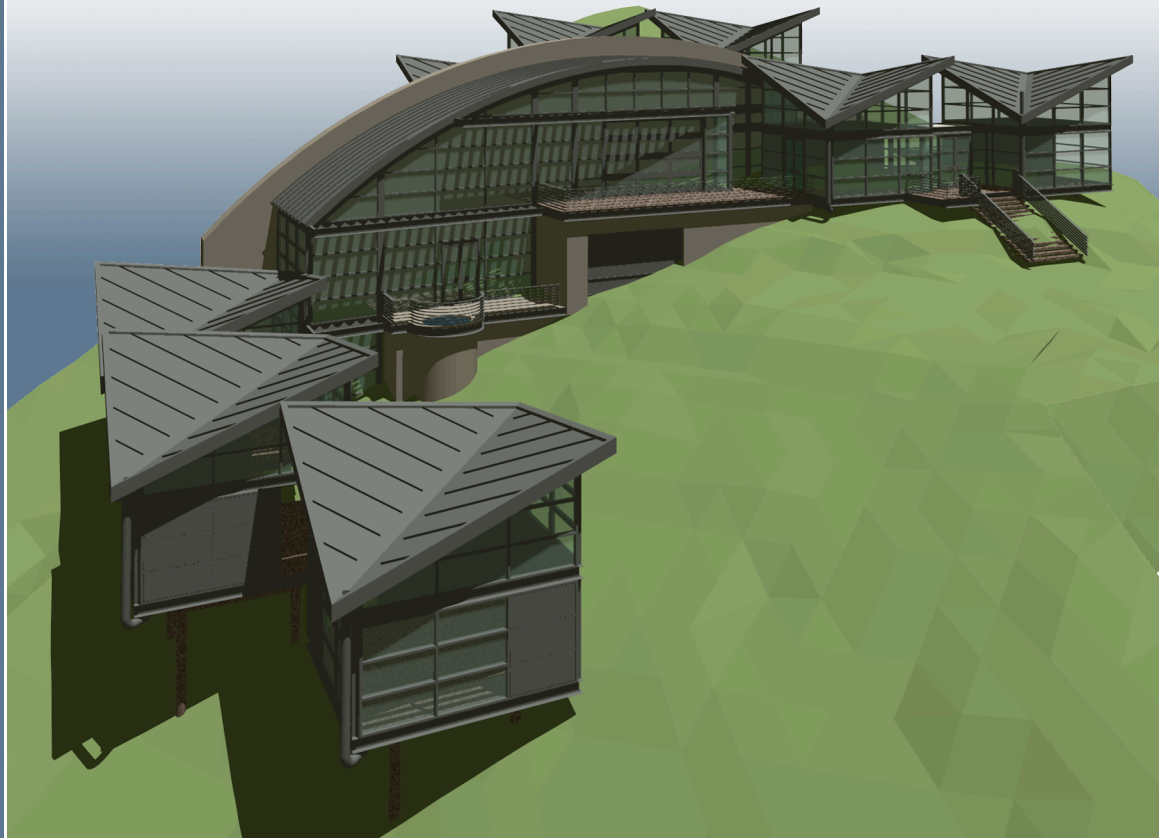


# PKA NEWSLETTER

Q3 : 2007 : Monday July 30

## The Martin Residence, M.V.

Designed in 1998, this project included passive solar and wind design, recycled metals and roof rainwater collection, all years before these items became part of LEED checklists.



## GREENWASHING

### Architecturally, what's truly green and how green is it?

The rush to “green” has hit the design and development industry like no other. While it is of great benefit to transition to green practices, it is important to address design intent and building practices with real and innovative strategies as opposed to adopting those that merely look green.

As in many industries, the claim of green is sometimes uncertain and sometimes outright suspect by design. Developers and architects in varying degrees have taken to touting their proposals before planning commissions, city councils, the public, and even potential buyers, as uncommonly green and therefore virtuous, when they are in fact not at all innovative.

Two beliefs seem to drive this “greenwashing.” First, green means either quicker or greater

approvals from communities, and second, green may mean more *green* in the form of increased asking prices.

Whatever the motivation, the truly sensitive and sustainable is discernible from the arm waving. In California for example, building codes regulate energy efficiency attributes for all buildings. One might claim to be green because of the insulation or windows they use, when in truth they are only abiding by established and required standards. Such green claims are similar to long existing products in the marketplace which are suddenly claiming to be green not because the particular product has improved, but because the marketing has.

Another common tactic to paint one’s project or proposal as green is to cite standards such as

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification *intents* without following through on the promises.

LEED standards are constantly being retooled and improved and as such the rating system for commercial buildings has often been applied to homes while a final LEED for homes certification is anticipated. Residential structures by their nature score extremely high on the commercial scale when in fact they are in no particular way especially green.

Truly green design and construction is not easily achieved, but it is unquestionably important. Much can be accessed in a project specs. and statistics, but green may simply be a visual matter. If a project looks truly innovative and different, it probably is.