

## Art and Sustainability in Architecture

Where Nature, Art, and Sustainability Intersect

BY ELIZABETH QUINN

To get a feel and understanding of a town or city, many components must be examined—components that engage and exhibit something unique within a community and to visitors often define the place. Architecture is one such component.

What does the architecture of Bend tell us about the place we live? On the surface, it says Bend is accessible. “Craftsman” is the word of the day here in Bend, with a plethora of new homes being built in that style. Second are homes of the kind seen in the plan books you can buy in grocery stores. Then come the modern traditional-styled homes designed by architects, with treatments of river rock and stripped juniper. These designs are comfortable, livable, and easily understood. They also speak to what we feel are elements of the environment (river rock and juniper), of the landscape, and the craftsmen of history.

The truth is, you can go to almost any western American town and find Craftsman homes on the rise and traditional styles that mingle with elements of place. In reality, the current trends speak to a narrow bandwidth of architectural aesthetics. So what is truly unique and engaging for architecture in Bend? What pushes the boundaries a bit to expand the vision of ourselves and who we are as a community surrounded by mountains, rivers, high desert and public art?

In Bend, the goal of sustainability and a desire to bring the outdoors inside are driving the creativity in architecture. Several architects and designers have focused on the goals of sustainability, introducing sustainable ideas whenever possible, often to people who knew nothing of the benefits before. Some designers have been going it alone, designing fewer homes a year but incorporating strictly sustainable elements. Others, such as Paul and Erin Biskup, who work with rastra block (a recycled styrofoam block that is filled with cement) build a home, live in it for a while, then sell it and build another.

Through the success of Shevlin Commons, developer Andy Crosby is demonstrating that the niche for sustainable, compellingly designed architecture is wider than once thought.

Increasingly, clients are coming to designers and architects asking for sustainable designs. Often partnered with the desire for a sustainably built home is a desire for a unique home. This uniqueness manifests itself in the design of the home, the materials used, and the special finishing touches. Several sustainable architects, designers, and purveyors of sustainable building products are operating in Bend, along with artisans who create special interior elements inspired by nature. Below is a sampling of architects and builders working in Central Oregon who are inspired by the landscape and environmental concerns.

### Cheryl Heinrich

When Cheryl Heinrich became a licensed architect, she committed herself to sustainable designs. She originally came to Bend to be the construction manager for Habitat for Humanity via Boston,



where she did restoration and preservation work. Along with sustainability, Heinrich has a passion for designing “out of the box.” This year, she has had the opportunity to work on three sustainable homes that have allowed her to stretch her creativity. Featured on the Central Oregon Builder Association’s Tour of Homes this year is a straw-bale home designed by Heinrich and built by Jay Johansen in Higher Ground. It features a timber frame of recycled wood, a traditional lime-based fresco exterior color treatment, passive solar, radiant floor heat, solar hot water heating, cork flooring, blown-in cellulose insulation, formaldehyde-free cabinets, and energy efficient appliances. In Vallahala Heights, Heinrich designed a three-story home for Brad and Annette Adkins that features varying roof slopes, offset glass block, a dry river bed in the entry, passive solar, and reclaimed timber.

### Al Tozer

Al Tozer has been designing homes for more than 10 years in Bend. Before being a designer, Tozer was a science teacher and school administrator. With graduate work in ecology, Tozer is a student of flora and fauna, wind, climate,



slope, and solar. He uses his knowledge about these subjects to make a home perform as well as possible. Whenever possible, Tozer has infused bioregionalism into his designs. Increasingly, he is getting the opportunity to push the boundaries of cottage design and has recently designed a modern prairie-style home on the east side of Awbrey Butte for Watercourse Homes, LLC, owned by Ruth Williamson and Lou Pepper. The home features a framing package of sustainably harvested wood from Joseph, OR, passive solar, river-recovered heart one wood flooring, countertops of recycled newspaper and resin, maximum daylight to minimize electrical lighting, strong cross ventilation, large overhangs to reduce sun exposure, and paints that have low or no off-gassing.

### Peter Grammlich

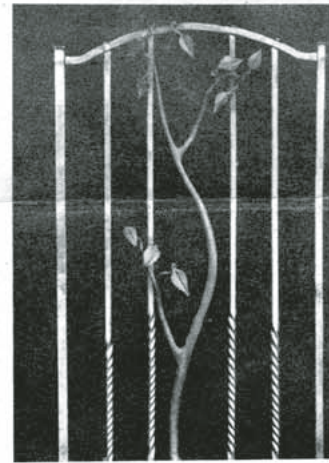
Peter Grammlich came to Bend, as did Heinrich, via Boston. A German native, Grammlich worked in Boston for a firm that did design projects in Europe. Grammlich was the project manager for the Mosse Palais, the first building to be constructed in the demilitarized zone in Berlin. The building sits on the site of the bunker where Hitler perished and now houses the American Jewish Committee. After four years of working in cities and on big projects, Grammlich decided to move to Bend and design homes



with a focus on sustainability. Currently, he is working on Pence Place Townhomes, space efficient units that may potentially incorporate solar hot water panels. Grammlich is also known for his design of The Bend Water Pageant swan and his architectural drawings and classes at COCC.

### Dry Canyon Forge

Joe Elliot of Dry Canyon Forge is called upon to bring natural elements into the interior spaces with architectural ironwork detailing that harmonizes the other parts of the design with the environment. Visual devices such as animals, fish, or plants in iron with traditional joinery engage the viewer’s interest and act as a bridge between people, nature, and architecture. Elliot is known for his unique designs for door handles, lights, handrails, railings, gates, and fireplace screens.



### Metolius Ridge Tiles

Justyn Livingston is a prolific local artist who creates tile murals under the name Metolius Ridge Tiles. She combines her extensive artistic talents and design experience with natural elements to create special touches in a room or space. Her work adorns fireplaces, backsplashes, floors, and walls. Livingston’s work has ranged from home furnishing product designs in Romania and Tonga to book cover illustrations and backdrops for theater productions. Her extensive client list includes Esprit International, Garnet Hill, Pottery Barn, Williams Sonoma, Fulcrum Publishing, and Designworks.

### Environmental Building Supply

Environmental Building Supply has just opened shop and offers an abundance of sustainable resources that are aesthetically interesting and appealing. Bamboo flooring, all-natural wool carpeting, natural paints and finishes, low-toxic protectants and sealants, 100 percent recycled glass tiles, and formaldehyde-free cabinets made in Portland are a few of the products available. Environmental Building Supply is another rich source filling out the ease and availability of sustainable home design products in Central Oregon.