



# FUNCTIONAL AND AESTHETIC

‘MODERN MISSION’ LOOK EMPLOYS SUSTAINABLE, ACCESSIBLE FEATURES

BY ALLISON KELTNER

Copper geometric shapes ripple gently over the entry of what architect Francisco Garcia has dubbed the “Modern Mission.” The home’s contemporary style is infused with the region’s history. Its thoughtful design blends traditional sustainable principles with modern technology to meet the needs of its occupants.

The homeowners, who wish to remain anonymous, live in New England and spend their winters in San Diego to escape the cold and be closer to their daughter and grandchildren. The husband is a retired real estate developer and now runs the nonprofit From the Top, which provides a platform for young, classically trained musicians. The wife suffered a stroke and has some mobility issues.

The owners wanted the Point Loma home to be fully accessible without making it look or feel like configurations that cater to the disabled. Garcia, principal architect at The Building Workshop (soon to be Modern Architecture Services), took their needs into account while incorporating his design philosophy, which emphasizes sustainability and transparency in the design and materials. The project began in fall 2012 and was completed by the end of 2015.

The 2,400-square-foot home, which was originally built in 1942 in Mission Beach and was moved to Point Loma in 1944, is roughly split into two parts. The main area, which stretches from the entry to the rear yard, is a single, open space that encompasses the living room, dining room, kitchen and family room. Accor-



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Architect Francisco Garcia turned a 1940s house into a modern, accessible home with sustainable features. The two-foot-deep crawl space under the home was removed to lower the floor, creating flush entries in the front (left) and the back (above) of the house.

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Three west-facing cooling towers capture ocean breezes for passive cooling, eliminating the need for air conditioning.

## Point Loma

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dion doors open to the backyard, extending the living area. A hallway runs parallel to this space and separates it from the three bedrooms and bathrooms on the other side of the home.

The ceiling over the living areas serves as the home's defining feature: exposed scissor trusses create a voluminous, light-filled space and, as Garcia pointed out, also evoke a sense of being in a church nave.

Garcia eliminated the original two-foot-high crawl space and lowered the floor, creating space for 12-foot-tall ceilings and flush entry thresholds at the front and back doors. The lumber from the original floor joists and interior partitions and stem walls was re-purposed in the ceiling trusses.

During construction, they discovered the beams were a little too short for the trusses, so Garcia incorporated X-shaped metal pieces at the center of each. "It's fortunate that we were the contractors," Garcia said. "Because we were on site, we were able to make a decision right away," designing something functional that matched the aesthetic.

The master bedroom in particular was designed with the owner's accessibility needs in



**Exposed scissor trusses in the open living, dining and kitchen area are the signature design element of the residence, which serves as a vacation home for a New England couple.**

mind. It opens to the backyard with a flush threshold doorway. Being able to open the home to the backyard allows the owners to relish not having to endure a bitter New England winter. The master bath is small but uses an open shower design, so there are no barriers for the homeowners to access and use the shower.

Design-wise, the owners wanted a "contemporary California look and feel" for the home. The ceiling echoes the traditional Mission-style architecture of the region, and inside, clean lines and simple shapes make the space feel modern. Garcia also de-

signed a custom decorative piece for the family room wall with walnut slats that is used to hang photographs.

The home incorporates "low-tech principles infused with high-tech elements" for heating and cooling, Garcia said. He oriented the home to take advantage of the sun, ocean breezes and marine layer. Three west-facing cooling towers extend up from the ceiling and use the ocean breeze to provide passive cooling, eliminating the need for conventional air conditioning. Succulents and other drought-tolerant, native plants with a drip irrigation system are

used in the front, rear and side yards.

The high-tech elements include the hydronic radiators and mechanical system to heat the home and all its water. "We were excited to use this," Garcia said, citing the challenges of traditional forced-air heaters: an attic is needed to house the ductwork, the heater tends to be noisy when turned on and it doesn't heat rooms very efficiently.

Instead, a boiler heats water that is circulated under the floors of the home to recessed in-floor radiator grilles, which also don't impede access throughout the space. At the time, only one company in San Diego installed such systems, and it wasn't cost-effective. "We figured with a college degree, the ability to read manuals and the Internet, we could do it ourselves," Garcia said. They purchased the equipment from Power Boiler Sales in Northern California, whose reps guided them through the installation.

Each element of the modern Mission-style home—the accessible design, the California contemporary aesthetic and the sustainable features—is remarkable on its own. Taken together, they create a structure where form follows function in a unique and beautiful way.

Allison Keltner is a San Diego freelance writer.