

## a meeting place



Photo by David Brumgard

The process of moving a home from one location to another is a subject Ethan Collier would rather not talk about. Evidently, post traumatic stress accompanies such a venture, and it is better left in the past where it belongs. But when you do the math, moving a home (while not new to the field) is pretty revolutionary. It preserves a home that would have been demolished and sent to the landfill. Instead the home is sent to another lot, thus filling unused space while preventing new construction. With no shortage of groans and sighs, Ethan wants to talk about something besides moving his home. Like how he found it, renovated it and made it green.

Firstly, it should be said that Ethan's perspective of home ownership changed from this experience. He now sees homes as having stories; that is, every home has its history, its unique qualities and distinctive features. Whether new, old, big or small, if the home could talk, it would tell you some amazing things. When you understand a home as having a story, you respect it more, and for Ethan, a home's story is very important.

...so here is the story behind his home:

In the Spring of 07, Ethan partnered with architect Taylor Bowers to purchase three lots on Harper Street, right off Cherokee Boulevard—an area that has seen North Chatt's westward expansion bring in new housing and commercial activity. Taylor and Ethan developed plans for an in-fill neighborhood of six sustainable courtyard homes for these lots. Instead of simply bulldozing the houses that occupied the lots, two were recycled and reused on site. And over the course of six months, the other house was salvaged.

At the start of this six month process were old rental properties that could only be described as a disaster. Among them was Ethan's home and at that time, its windows were falling out, its leaky roof had

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given way to rot, and it had no functioning electrical. There seemed no other option than to bulldoze the house. But upon closer inspection, Ethan found some of its redeeming qualities. "I went underneath the house and saw that the framing for the floor system was in pretty good shape, and the framing for the walls was also in good shape," explains Ethan. It only made sense to salvage the home, and it was not long after the process began that Ethan found an empty lot only 4 blocks away.

Green is as green does. So when Ethan saw the opportunity to save a home from the landfill as well as fill in an empty lot, he not only did it, but bought the home as well. He explains that moving the home was probably the greenest thing about it, but he then went on to explain some of his home's other features.

Like its hardiplank siding which is pre-painted and thus eliminates the use of paint cans and paint waste. Not only that, it lasts longer. He also discussed the tightly sealed building envelope which eliminates cool air from moving outside and hot air from coming in (it was not until the end of May that Ethan turned on the air conditioning, which means a lot around here). It is only fitting that he live in a home as green as those that Collier Construction builds for others.

But if the home is smart, it is because of its design. A very intentional use of the 1100 square feet make for a comfortable, practical and functional living space. For instance, the home is divided into two sections—a private space and a public space. The private space consists of two bedrooms and two baths. These are portioned off from the public space, which is comprised of the kitchen, dining room and living area. The public space is intentionally centered around people. That is, it is centered around entertaining rather than entertainment.

As you walk through the front door and into the living room, you will not find a television or stereo system; rather, you'll find a comfortable place to rest your bones for a while. More than likely, you'll find Ethan or his wife, Mary, in the kitchen preparing a meal. And certainly you'll find Caleb, their 18-month-old son, running from the living room to the kitchen and back again...uninterrupted by needless walls. In fact, you'll find a home that perfectly serves the Collier family and their lifestyle.

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Perhaps it is best summarized as “sophistication meets simplicity.” While the methods used to renovate and move the home were highly elaborate, its layout and design prove that sometimes less is more. “The 450 square feet of pubic space feels so big on account of the absence of walls between the kitchen, dining room and living room,” says Ethan. This home’s design is all about using space as a comfortable place for friends and family to convene. “It has become the meeting place. And because of its location, we meet friends here and relax for a while before going out,” Ethan explains.

So while Ethan and Mary’s home has become a meeting place, going out is something they’ve begun doing more often. Juggling work, family and play is hard. But it’s not so bad when you live where you want to build your family, work and play. Both Ethan and Mary are less than ten minutes from work, their home is within walking distance of Coolidge and Renaissance Parks (Caleb’s back yard), and it is just down the street from their gym. For all of these activities, home is the starting point.... No need to drive when you can bike, walk, jog or run.

And that is the appeal of urban living. You have immediate access to all the features of city life. What’s more, urban living is ideal when your home serves as a reprieve from the city’s fast pace. Like many people, the Colliers have figured it out—living in the city doesn’t have to conflict with the comfort and quietness of home. The Collier’s have found the perfect home, a place where things slow down and where a premium is placed on friends and family. It is a simple meeting place that is simultaneously tailored to their active lifestyle.



# better.

## before you spend your green

Ethan Collier

Photo by David Brumgard



I often wonder if people are getting tired of hearing about green. Green this, Green that. It gets a little old after a while, all this talk of green. Frankly I get tired of listening to people tell me how green they are or how what they are doing is so green.

Everywhere we turn a company is telling us how green it is? It gets hard to tell what is legit and what is not. We call some of this green talk “green washing.” It’s what you do if you’re not green, never have been green, but you don’t want the public to know it.

Why is it okay for the companies who two years ago couldn’t care less about the environment to suddenly

make some relatively small changes, call themselves green, and profit from it? Where were they last year? What were they doing? And why, with all the resources that they have, are they just now making changes? I’m not okay with that.

Why have industry leaders, the ones building a thousand units a week, not gotten off their tails and made some of the hard changes? Why, when they do make a single change, do they get so much attention? Builders and developers who have, for the last two decades, built with nothing but profit in mind can’t make some changes and call themselves green. It’s just not the case.

A company is what it is not because of what they say today or what they are going to do, or even what they did yesterday or the year before. A company should be judged on the basis of what it has done, its history, the last several years of service. As consumers, we should be pleased to see that as we demand companies go greener they are beginning to make changes. However, making those changes does not make them green; they should only be able to make that claim and carry that title after proving it through years of service and years of decisions that fit with the claim they are making. Then they can promote themselves as green all they want.

The point is, don’t give some company that has been dumping chemicals in our watershed for the last decade your business because the owner just put solar panels on his home. Do your research. A green company should have been doing green before it was popular, and they should have been doing it because it is the right thing to do.

If you care about green, ask some questions before you spend your green.