

# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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**2010  
IN REVIEW**  
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## Modern and Connected

### *Orinda's Award Winning Homes*

By Andrea A. Firth

Contemporary or modern architecture makes up a small percentage of the residential building projects in Orinda according to the City's Planning Director, Emmanuel Ursu. The angles, massing, and large amounts of glass found in modern designs can present challenges, says Ursu, but he notes that Orinda's sizeable lots and plentiful vegetation can accommodate bigger setbacks and enable privacy to facilitate a contemporary design. Interestingly, modern architectural design was employed in two of the residential building projects that received the Mayor's

Award for Architectural Excellence in 2010: the Gasparinis' home remodel, known as the Hundred Foot House, and the Remicks' new home which was recognized for Environmental Sustainability. In both projects the homeowners chose a modern design to enhance the connection between the home and the outdoor environs.

#### **Hundred Foot House**

After 15 years of apartment dwelling in San Francisco, Jon and Michele Gasparini were eager to find a safe and quiet community in which to raise their family. The great schools,

beautiful topography, and close proximity to the city made Orinda an ideal choice to relocate their family that includes three children, ages eight, five, and three years, and a hound called Greta.

After purchasing a run-down rancher on a heavily wooded lot, the Gasparinis found that their plan for a modest remodeling project was to be a labor of both love and patience. They uncovered structural issues that imposed significant additional requirements, resources, and time. "We purchased our home in 2003 but did

not move in until 2009," says Jon who, with help of his father, chipped away at the project working alongside his contractors to build the majority of the home over a four-year span.

Perched 20 feet above the street just below the canopy of the oak and redwood trees that surround the house, the Gasparinis' home feels like a tree house—very private yet simultaneously open and bright. "We were drawn to the heavily wooded surroundings and wanted to appreciate the outdoors from every room in the house," says Jon.

The original 1,500 square foot L-shaped home was expanded to 2,400 square feet by adding small amounts of new space at the tips. The modified T-shaped structure has four bedrooms and three full baths. Unlike the flat roofs found on many modern structures, the roof of each segment of the house extends upward from the center like the wings of a butterfly. The entranceway, kitchen, and family room are situated in the original 16-foot wide footprint surrounded by walls of glass. The adjacent, perpendicular segment that houses the bedrooms and bathrooms is more solid and private with smaller, two-foot wide windows that punctuate the walls at even intervals. By excavating part of the hillside, the retaining wall that the original house was built alongside was pushed back to yield a 16-foot wide, flat courtyard that runs the length of the public living space. Three extra-wide, double doors line the back wall of the home and open freely into the courtyard creating an indoor/outdoor living room in the warmer months.



*The "butterfly-shaped" roof on the Gasparinis home.*

*Photo Tim Griffith x*

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