



Dennis Allen Named the City of Santa Barbara's First Water Hero

Dennis Allen has been named the City of Santa Barbara's first Water Hero for his LEED Platinum residential development, Victoria Garden Mews, in downtown Santa Barbara. The four unit condo development, which he helped design, build and now lives in, showcases many advances in water efficient practices, as well as several other sustainable features and systems.

Dennis Allen, of Allen Associates, has been building in Santa Barbara for over 30 years. As a builder, he wanted to push the envelope and try out new building innovations and strategies. As a homeowner, he was motivated to reduce his carbon footprint and create a peaceful, sustainable residence from which he could bike and walk.

The project was designed – by Thomson Naylor Architects - to incorporate many water wise features, both indoors and outdoors. All condo units have high efficiency dual flush toilets, high efficiency washing machines, and low flow showerheads and faucet aerators, significantly reducing the project's indoor water consumption.

Due to the small hardscape footprint of the residence's hydraulic lift parking garage, the Victoria Garden Mews has room for a large central courtyard complete with 30 fruit trees, numerous water wise plants, and a vegetable garden. But this bountiful garden will not be a drain on the residents' pocketbooks because it is designed to irrigate the plants solely with rainwater.

Rainfall is directed into roof gutters with double filtration systems at each downspout; the downspouts lead to a 14,000 gallon rubber "bladder" that hangs in the basement. The bladder filled up during only one of this past winter's rainstorms and Dennis states that "this year is probably going to be the heaviest draw because we want to make sure the plants get established, so we are doing more irrigation than we will be in the future." Still, the bladder has more water left in it to continue watering the garden this fall.

The central garden – designed by Grace Design Associates - is landscaped with water wise plants, many of them native, which are not likely to need supplemental irrigation once they are established. The native plants draw in many beneficial insects, and, as Dennis observes, "the plants were selected to invite butterflies, bees, and other insects to create a dynamic living garden. Now we are seeing more and more butterflies hatching in the garden." Additionally, the property is home to another set of residents: a bee hive provides pollinators for the garden and surrounding neighborhood.

The property also includes a remodeled Victorian home with a front lawn which is a grass species called UC Verde Buffalograss. This grass uses about 70% less water than a traditional lawn species, and requires little mowing. Dennis believes the lawn will only need to be mowed a few times a year. In addition, the lawn is irrigated via a subsurface drip system which is underneath the grass, thus reducing water loss from evaporation.

The Victoria Garden Mews project is a model home for the Santa Barbara area showcasing how sustainable development can be attainable and very low water using. Congratulations, Dennis, on being a Water Hero!

See photos on next page →



Dennis Allen in front of his sustainable development, Victoria Garden Mews.



The central courtyard features water wise and native plants that are watered via drip irrigation.



The front lawn is low water using UC Verde Buffalograss which was installed as plugs and is irrigated via a subsurface drip system.

Each roof gutter leads to a double filtered downspout which leads into the basement's rainwater "bladder."



The condo units have high efficiency dual flush toilets, high efficiency washing machines, and faucet and shower aerators.

