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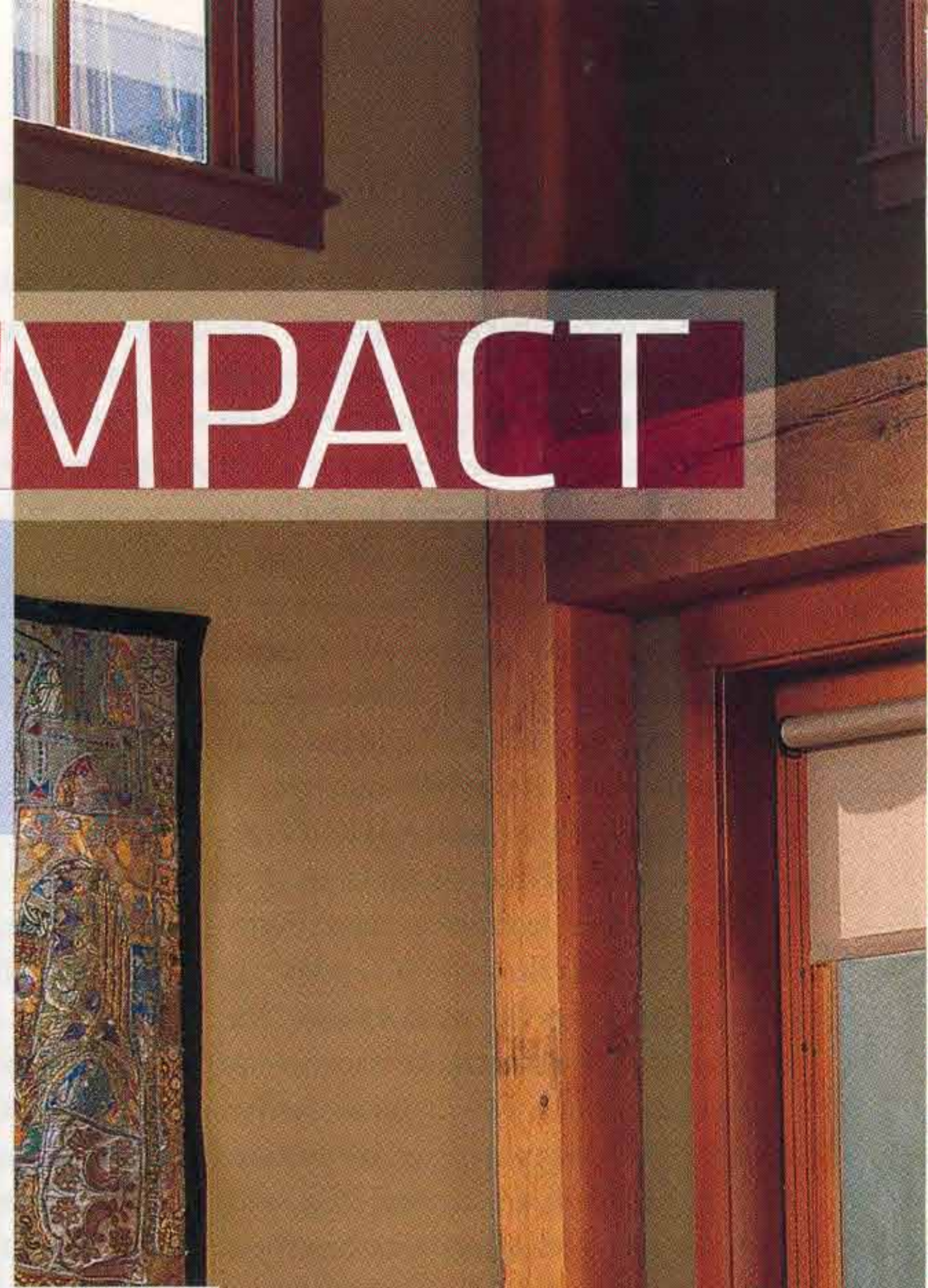
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# LOW-IMPACT living

starting with a small footprint, a builder balances comfort and sustainability in his family's new farmhouse



**HOMEOWNER DEREK**  
Guarascio built a beautiful, eco-friendly home on a budget. Using reclaimed lodgepole pine for the exterior horizontal siding, left, was one money-saving choice. The Douglas fir timbers in the great room, this page, came from a burned-out forest.

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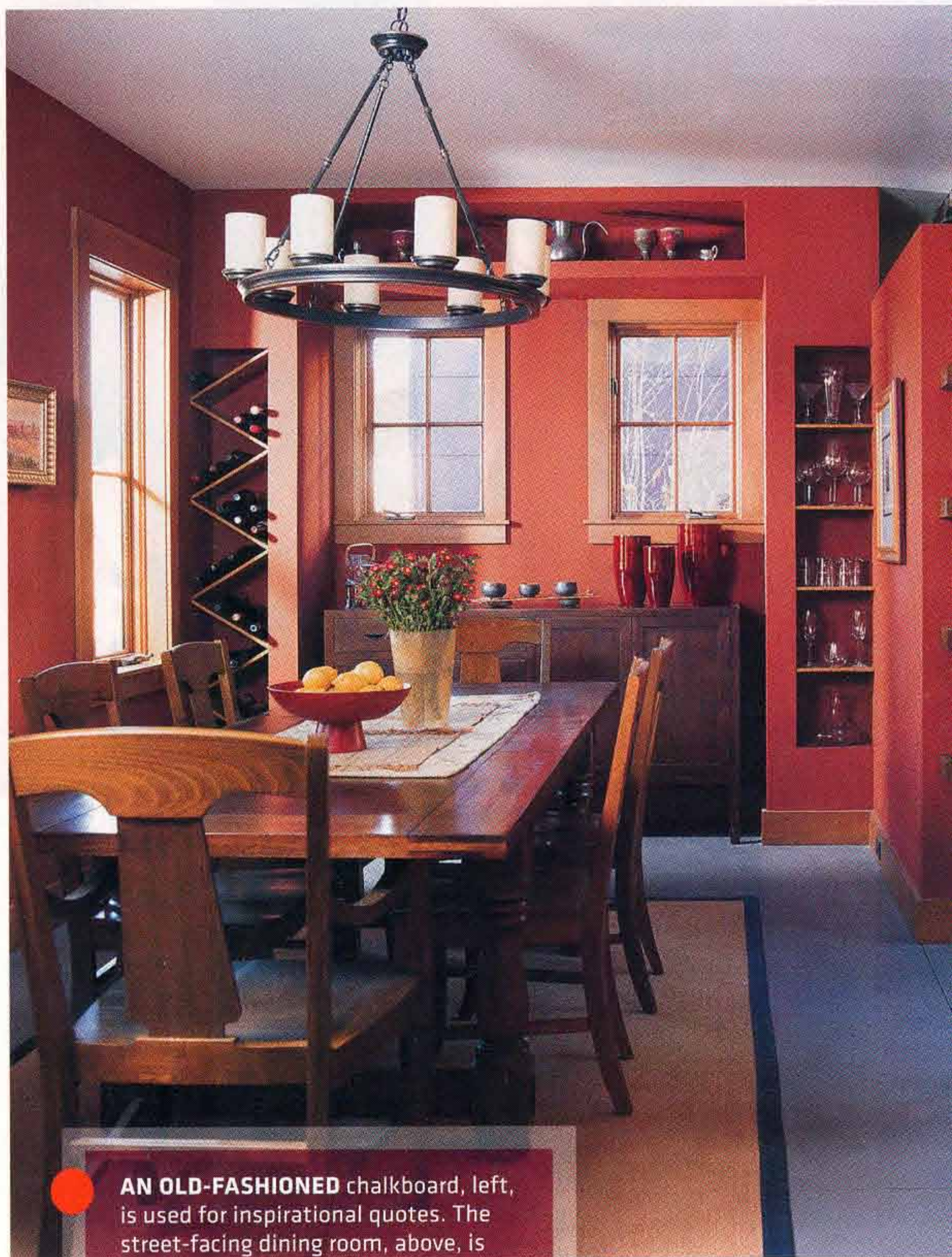
**A 5-FOOT-LONG** black granite counter with a breakfast bar at one end separates the kitchen from the living area. Homeowner KC Guarascio arranges jarred ingredients on the open shelves. The red wall provides a visual link to the dining room through the opening to its left.

**T**hese days, it seems that everyone is thinking green. And, within reason, many of us would like to live that way.

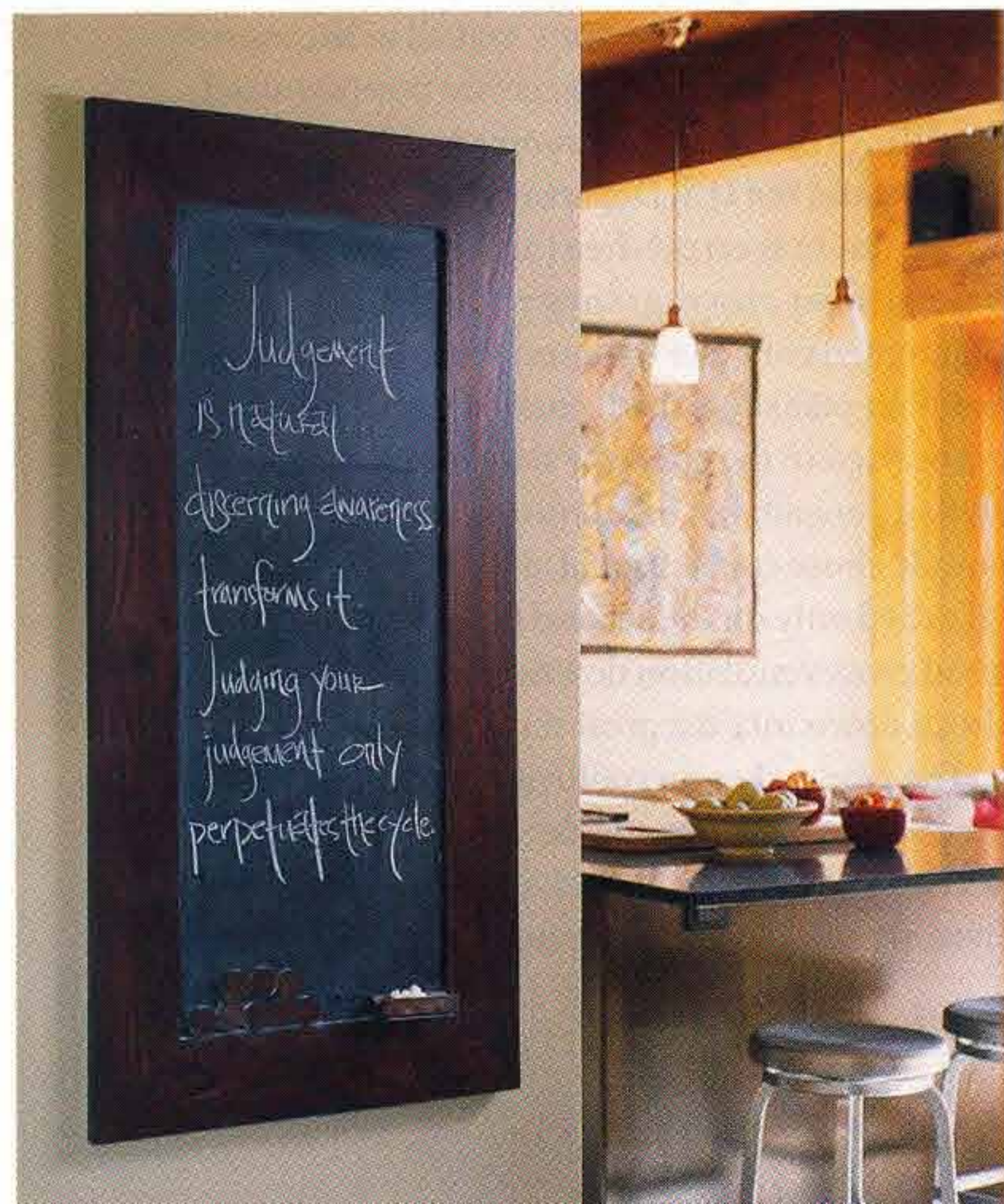
Derek and KC Guarascio are blazing that reasonable middle ground—the path between merely switching to compact fluorescent lightbulbs and building an off-the-grid yurt: They eat organic food, drive hybrid cars, and now they live in a sustainable house.

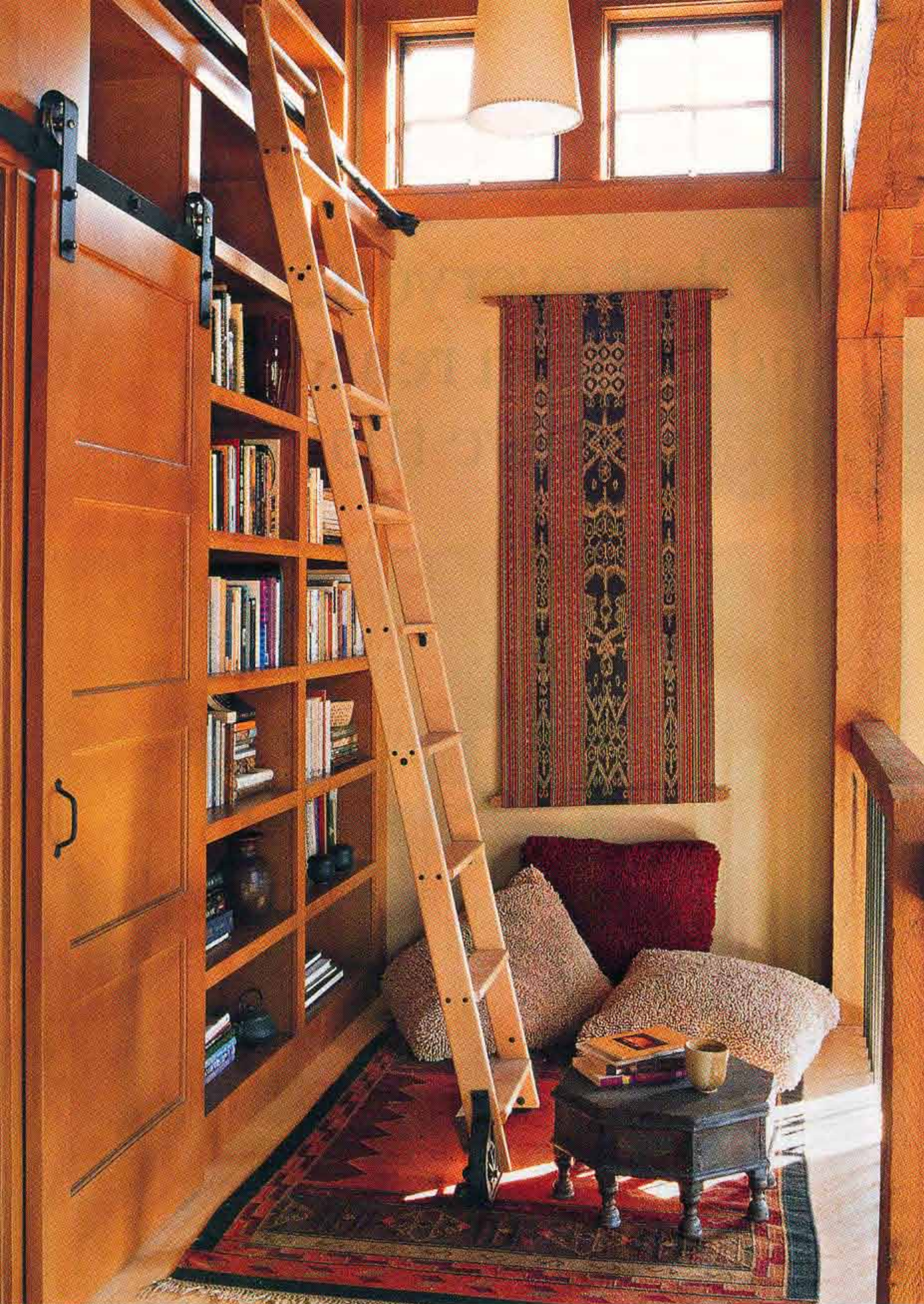
“We want to be as green as possible while living in comfort and style,” says Derek, a custom builder who owns a Boulder, Colorado, firm specializing in infill development (new construction on vacant lots within established communities, as opposed to in new tracts). The three-bedroom, three-bath house he designed and erected two years ago embraces many environmentally oriented products and practices, and showcases his taste for architecture that’s simple and sits easily in its surroundings.

Boulder has a strict growth boundary, and when Derek found a 7,000-square-foot infill site with views of the Flatirons (the area’s famous landmark rock formations), he snapped it up. He laid out the house at only 2,650 square feet, which left plenty of yard space. “We kept the footprint fairly small to avoid covering the earth with impervious surfaces, which make natural drainage impossible and contribute to water pol-



**AN OLD-FASHIONED** chalkboard, left, is used for inspirational quotes. The street-facing dining room, above, is equipped with built-ins for wine and glassware; a natural-toned sisal rug covers the gray-pigmented concrete floor.





## THE clerestory windows LET LIGHT AND BREEZES flow in freely

we wanted to avoid asphalt shingles, which are made from an oil-based material,” Derek notes.

Inside, the layout was designed to suit the casual way the family of four (which includes a two-year-old and an infant) lives. The floor plan revolves around a two-story great room—comprising an open kitchen and informal living and eating areas—that spans most of the rear of the house and connects to an outdoor patio via four sets of 6-by-8-foot French doors.

These full-view glass portals, and a collection of fixed windows above them, were designed to optimize passive solar gain on the home’s south side, which helps to add warmth in the winter. The doors have manual sunshades to control the heat in the summertime. The expanse of glass floods the core of the house with natural light, brightening the kitchen’s dark-stained alder-wood cabinetry and black, honed granite countertops. Open horizontal shelves are used instead of upper cabinets; they fit right into the rustic decor. The Guarascios opted for high-end stainless steel appliances but made sure that all of the models

were Energy Star-rated, therefore meeting strict guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The house is carpet-free (limiting toxic off-gassing); natural-fiber area rugs (some wool, some sisal) top pigmented concrete floors on the first level and bamboo planks on the second. Radiant heating was embedded in the concrete slab foundation and installed beneath the bamboo upstairs. For cooling, the couple chose conventional, ducted air-conditioning. “It’s used only on the second floor, because we get good cross ventilation downstairs, and the cool air drops down into the great room,” Derek says.

The pair makes no apologies for this less-than-green feature. “We made decisions based on what was important to us,” Derek says. “It gets really hot here, we like air-conditioning, and it’s good for re-

lution,” he says. He also practiced eco-conscious landscaping methods, such as using native plants and drip irrigation (applying water slowly to the soil, minimizing loss through evaporation or runoff).

The home’s exterior design complements the various architectural styles and vintages in the neighborhood. “My intent was to add extra character to the street without stepping too far out of the box,” says Derek. “It’s really important to blend in with the setting.” He describes the structure as a modern farmhouse—a fresh take on familiar shapes and materials.

The lower half of the exterior is clad in chocolate-stained, horizontal siding made of lodgepole pine salvaged from a nearby forest killed by beetles. Western red cedar—stained green and applied in a board-and-batten pattern—covers the top part of the house. Another nod to the local historical vernacular is the standing-seam metal roof. “It’s classic farmhouse, and

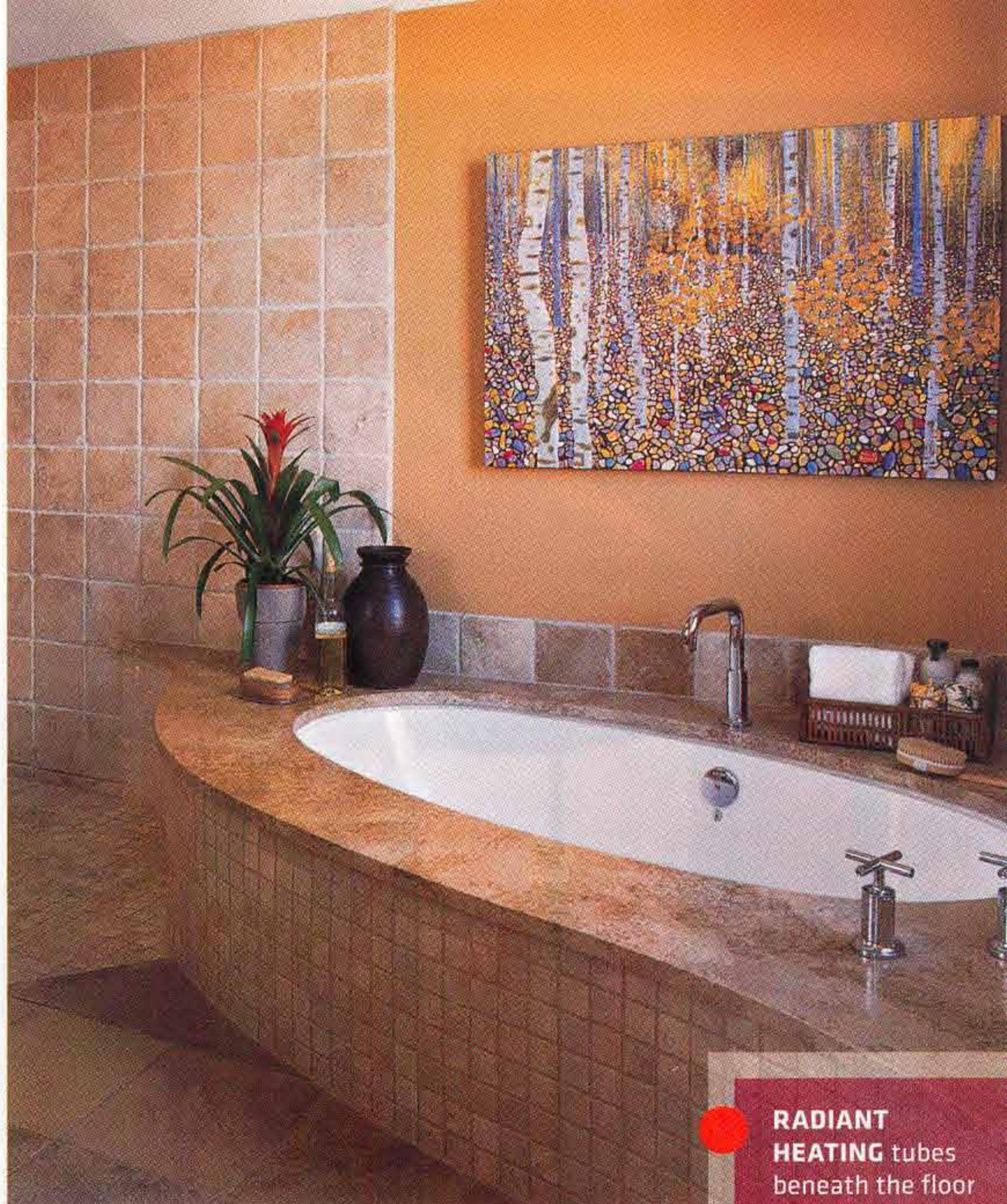


# THE master bath IS LUXURIOUS—BUT ecologically sound AS WELL

sale.” And, he notes, cooling just one floor uses half the energy it would take to do so for the entire house.

The interior design emphasizes clean lines and organic elements, and is punctuated by Asian-inspired furniture and accessories. KC, a homemaker who holds a master’s degree in environmental leadership, devised an earthy color palette of forest green, rich red, and spicy mustard, implementing it in part by using zero-VOC paints. “Good design and being green go hand in hand,” she says. “With a little online research, finding products was easy.”

By any standards, the master bathroom is luxurious, but it’s also ecologically sound. A sunken tub has an Italian marble deck crafted of a remnant piece obtained from a local stone fabricator. Open shelving made of bamboo and formaldehyde-free fiberboard, and a reclaimed fir countertop bring sleekness to the vanity. Derek and KC opted for a single, rectangular, cast iron, deck-mounted sink. “In our minds, simply choosing to buy one fewer—



**RADIANT HEATING** tubes beneath the floor tile and tub area help keep bath-water warm.

of anything—counts as sustainable,” Derek says.

In his work, Derek encourages clients to use green products and practices whenever possible. “It’s all about balance and what people are comfortable with,” he says. In his own home, he’s created a wonderful example of blending environmental responsibility with modern convenience and great looks. ■

## Make It

## Sustainable

Boulder, Colorado-based luxury home builder Derek Guarascio enlisted green building products and practices to create an environmentally friendly home for his family. To learn more, visit [buildingforhealth.com](http://buildingforhealth.com), where you can glean info about—and buy—a host of related goods and services. Here are some of the items Guarascio used, plus websites with helpful data about other green choices.

- **KITCHEN CABINETS** free of MDF (which is made with the toxin urea-formaldehyde). [neilkellycabinets.com](http://neilkellycabinets.com).
- **RECYCLED** cast-iron drain, vent, and waste plumbing instead of PVC piping. [charlottepipe.com](http://charlottepipe.com).
- **TOXIN-FREE** tile, concrete, and bamboo floor finishes. [afmsafecoat.com](http://afmsafecoat.com).
- **ON-DEMAND** hot water for kitchen and all bathrooms. [rinnai.us.com](http://rinnai.us.com).
- **NONTOXIC** expanding foam insulation for exterior building envelope. [icynene.com](http://icynene.com).
- **HYPOALLERGENIC** wallboard compound. [murcowall.com](http://murcowall.com).
- **NATURAL** cotton-fiber insulation for mid-floors and interior walls. [bondedlogic.com](http://bondedlogic.com).
- **DOUBLE-GLAZED**, energy-saving low-e wood windows. [andersenwindows.com](http://andersenwindows.com).
- **RADIANT HEATING** saves energy by heating objects instead of air. [nuheat.com](http://nuheat.com).