



Clever Homes

"I offer my clients a variety of prefab paths," says Toby Long of Clever Homes, "and work with them to assess the best scenario given the goals."

This 3,000-square-foot, three-plus bedroom home in Burlingame was completed in 2012. The building was constructed using a prefabricated frame. Wall, floor and

roof systems were constructed using materials that were digitally designed and pre-cut in the factory; systems and finishes were installed on-site (though the house also could have been completely constructed in the factory).

Custom finishes and appliances were used throughout.



INTERIOR DESIRES

Modern prefab is not just bold exteriors, but sleek, sustainable touches inside, too

By **Raquel Loren**

Long gone are the days when the word prefab — as in prefabrication — meant drab architecture and unimaginative interior design. Even in the Bay Area, a prefab home can be an extraordinary dwelling, and offers attractive options to build and live green.

Prefab generally refers to structures that are manufactured off-site, usually in sections, and then shipped and assembled on site. Because of this, prefab homes can be built more quickly and with less waste than custom homes.

Increasingly, the interiors of prefab homes are showcases for modular and sustainable living, whether they're appliances, walls, flooring or cabinetry. In fact, architectural and design writer/critic Stanley Abercrombie argues that prefab has had more influence on interior elements than exteriors and structural elements.

"Prefabrication, while often focused on structural elements, has had its most profound effect on our interiors," Abercrombie writes in the foreword of "Inside Prefab: The Ready-Made Interior," by Deborah Schneiderman (Princeton Architectural Press, 2012). "Indeed, some prefabricated exteriors go to great lengths to appear as if they had never been near a factory, while inside we have come to welcome the order, modularity, efficiency and precision that prefabrication can bring."

The prefab home can also boast a custom high-end interior, of course. On these pages are examples of both, from Oakland-based architect Toby Long of Clever Homes, and Blu Homes, with a factory in Vallejo. Clever Homes and Blu Homes build sustainable prefab homes and other buildings, many in the Bay Area.



Dennis Mayer



Indoor kitchen counters, above, are Eco Stone from Cosentino, made from recycled mirrors, porcelain, fly ash and other recycled materials. Cabinets are by Wenge. Bosch electric cooktop (which won't heat up unless a pot is on it), hood and refrigerator. The Thermador dual-unit ovens feature a steam oven on top and convection oven below. Floors are farmed eucalyptus prefinished by Lyptus.

The **outdoor kitchen**, second from top left, features a Cal Flame G5, five-burner built-in natural gas grill. Countertops are Baltic brown, granite prefab material slabs. The outdoor deck is ipe wood.

Bathroom tile is from Dal Tile, left. Cabinets in the downstairs and smaller upstairs bath are bamboo; the master bath features Wenge cabinets. Countertops by Silestone. Custom mirror frames by Matthew Art Framing in San Francisco. Shower doors by ELS Shower Door & Mirror in San Carlos.

Other sustainable touches: The wall-to-wall Mohawk carpet upstairs is made from recycled plastic bottles. Azek roof pavers are manufactured from recycled automobile tires. Fourteen solar panels on the roof, combined with LED lighting throughout the interior and exterior and high-efficiency kitchen appliances, water heater and furnace, reduce energy cost. Living roofs can be found atop three areas of the home (near left).

For more on Clever Homes, see CleverHomes.net.

Photographer Dennis Mayer specializes in architectural design and interiors. You can see more of his work at houzz.com/pro/dennismayerphotography.

Blu Homes

Blu Homes, founded in 2008, makes prefabricated houses that are sustainably designed and built, and energy efficient. Based in San Francisco and Waltham, Mass., the company's homes and other structures are made in its Vallejo factory, and its contemporary designs and green aesthetic are appealing to Bay Area buyers.

"Blu Homes are growing in popularity in many markets nationwide, but particularly in California and New York/New England," says Diana Helfrich, vice president of marketing. "Some of the things our customers are most attracted to, besides Blu's designs and use of green building materials, is our steel framing technology, which allows for homes that have tall ceilings and expansive windows and Blu's streamlined building process."

Blu Homes offers eight, architect-designed models. This includes the iconic Breezhouse, designed in 2005 by local architect Michelle Kaufmann; one of the Breezhouses shown here was the Sunset magazine "Idea" house in 2012. Blu touts its proprietary steel framing and building technology, saying it results in homes that are visually striking, precision-built and strong. Prices range from \$130,000 to \$625,000.

Through the use of computer modeling, Blu Home buyers — and prospective buyers — can see what their homes will look like from the outside and inside. They also can choose from suites of high-end finishes, cabinetry and appliances that are standard or upgrades, or choose to customize as they want.

A **Breezhouse** in Healdsburg, below, built in 2012. In the **kitchen**, right, the Walker Zanger backsplash tile and Executive cabinetry are upgrades. The Kitchenaid range and Caesarstone counters are standard.

The **bath**, above right, features standard finishes, including "Florida" tile, a Kohler tub and sink and Caesarstone counter.

For more on Blu Homes, see BluHomes.com.





Courtesy Blu Homes

This home, built in 2012, also is located in Healdsburg. The builder placed the Breezhouse design atop a site-built first floor, making the structure two stories. At 3,600 square feet, it has three bedrooms and four bathrooms.

Custom tile was used in this **bathroom** (one of several in the home). The Kohler shower and Toto toilet are standard.

The buyer made several custom choices in the **kitchen** finishes — for example, the backsplash is custom, as is the color of the Caesarstone countertops. The Executive cabinetry, Kitchenaid range and Kohler sink are standard.

