



THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

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Leaders put Bellingham-area business at front of green-building wave

CRAIG PARRISH - FOR THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

On early spring days in Northwest Washington, gray skies occasionally let through a sliver of sunshine. Every bright moment seems countered with several minutes of afternoon rain.

But the gloom on one mid-March day this year was offset at a house under construction on West Lake Samish Road, where at least a dozen windows of varying size faced the lake and let in a flood of natural light.

Dylan Hicks and Jeff Mack of Bellingham Bay Builders were at the home working on interior details. Hicks, who co-owns the workers' cooperative with Dave Brogan and Ross Grier, says the business was founded on a basis of environmental responsibility and sustainability. Those criteria are far more commonplace today than when Bellingham Bay Builders started six years ago, and Hicks says it's an evolving process.

"We've been able to change things as new technologies have been developed and become more mainstream and accepted," Hicks said. "All our waste is separated, all metal is recycled, and our waste that goes into a landfill goes into just one bin."

Hicks and Mack pointed out several items in the house that had been recycled, including the striking fir beams used in an impressive staircase.

"We do a lot of remodels and additions, and we use recycled lumber and other materials as much as possible," Hicks said. "Customers are a lot more attuned to what we do, to be more sustainable. Attitudes and perception about building 'green' are changing."

ABOUT DYLAN HICKS

Age: 39

Occupation: co-owner, Bellingham Bay Builders

Mode of transport: company truck, walking when projects are close by

Average fuel bill: Minimal. "We try to use just one truck as much as possible."

Eco-cheat: "It would be nice to not have to use trucks all the time," said Hicks, who added that he plans to walk to a future project two blocks from his home.

Turning point: "When we started out as a business, our first priority was success, and to make green-building a priority. We had stated that as a company goal from the first day."

Favorite green Web site: sustainableconnections.org, usgbc.org

Best tip: "If a builder came to us and asked how to get on board, there's a ton of information, Web sites and various publications."