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In 2011, Steven and Cindy Ambers' house in Los Angeles, CA was destroyed beyond repair by a devastating kitchen fire. Family friend Robin Wilson of Robin Wilson Home asked her colleagues in the eco-friendly building and design industry to assist with the creation of a house specifically engineered to be fire-safe non-toxic and energy efficient.

Photos courtesy of Matt Armendariz

Rebuilding from the ground up

After a devastating house fire, a Los Angeles family vows to create a stunning eco-friendly new home — featuring Silestone quartz surfacing

by Sara Garafalo

On Christmas Day in 2011, Steven and Cindy Ambers' house in Los Angeles, CA, was destroyed beyond repair by a tragic kitchen fire. At the time, the family never imagined it would be the catalyst for a new healthier home

life for them. In January of 2014, they became the first on the West Coast to move into a bungalow specifically engineered to be fire-safe, non-toxic and energy efficient. The property was built mostly with donations and discounts from builders, architects and

designers with eco-friendly materials and sustainable design. They pitched in to help at the request of a family friend, New York-based designer Robin Wilson.

"I had to help," said Wilson, owner of Robin Wilson Home. "I



In picking a sustainable building material for surfaces throughout the home, the homeowners selected Silestone quartz surfacing by Cosentino for seven locations in the residence, including the kitchen, the built-in dining room buffet, the desktop, the vanity sinks, the shower seat and the laundry room. The quartz used on the kitchen island is Daria by Silestone. The edge was a large ogee, and was cut and polished to match the factory finish.

Silestone was chosen for its antibacterial qualities and the fact that a manmade material could be more durable, less porous and easier to clean.



needed to make sure they had a happy home and could put their lives back together. We should all pay it forward because this was an accident that could happen to anyone."

Wilson asked her colleagues in the eco-friendly building and design industry to be donors and the Sustainable Furnishings



The owners liked the variety of colors and finishes of Silestone, as they felt they give a clean finished look for the space.



The Silestone desk top elegantly completes the built-in desk.

Council to be the charitable partner for the project. The businesses were eager to help because it was a chance to rebuild the home the “right way” — from the foundation to the furniture, which is high design and affordable for budget-conscious consumers.

“We wanted to help a family rebuild after they lost everything due to a holiday fire caused by a child’s preschool art project — a menorah — which caught the kitchen on fire,” said Wilson. “The children were affected by respiratory issues after the fire, and we wanted to help the client build an eco-friendly home so that the family could live in a non-toxic space. We used low-to-no VOC paints, bamboo flooring, Water Sense certified plumbing fixtures by Kohler, solar panels,

LED lighting, and furniture and wall coverings certified by the Sustainable Furnishings Council.”

In picking a sustainable building material for surfaces throughout the home, the homeowners selected Silestone quartz surfacing by Cosentino for seven locations in the residence, including the kitchen, the built-in dining room buffet, the desktop, the vanity sinks, the shower seat and the laundry room. The quartz used on the kitchen island is Daria by Silestone. The edge was a large ogée, and was cut and polished to match the factory finish. They also used this for a small sideboard in the dining room and a countertop in the laundry room, which was done in a bullnose edge. Silestone was chosen for its antibacterial qualities, and the fact

that a manmade material could be more durable, less porous and easier to clean. Many other options were considered, but the owners liked the variety of colors and finishes made by Silestone, as they felt it was a clean finished look for the space. The stone came directly from Cosentino’s showroom. “Cosentino has a beautiful showroom in the Los Angeles area, where designers, architects and clients can visit to touch/feel/view stone in vignettes, and also visit the slab area to see the options on a larger scale,” said Wilson. “In total, we used five full slabs and two partial slabs.”

As with any big project, the team faced some difficulties along the way. “The biggest challenge in the design was ensuring that the large kitchen island would come together nicely without vis-

The countertop in the laundry room was done with a bullnose edge.

ible seams," said Wilson. "The fabricator did such a great job that it is difficult to determine where the slabs were joined."

The reaction to the finished home has been overwhelmingly positive. Not only is the family extremely pleased with their new house, but their inspiring story has been featured in numerous publications, including *Woman's Day* and *Elle Décor*, as well as on several television news segments. □

Private Residence Los Angeles, CA

Architect: Eric Porter, Los Angeles, CA

Builder: Becker General Contractors, Los Angeles, CA

Designer: Robin Wilson Home, New York, NY

Quartz Manufacturer: Cosentino USA, Sugarland, TX

