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A Colonial Beach house that has been retrofitted with eco-friendly materials and furnishings.

Greener living

By Paul Mountjoy

At a glance, 211 2nd Street in Colonial Beach appears to be a well-kept or possibly remodeled home. But on closer look, it is far more than this; the home is a representation of the future of 'green,' retrofit re-construction.

The home is the result of a collaborative effort spearheaded by Tania Shand, Principle of Beyond Category Development (BCD) whose mission is to create eco-friendly, green-oriented homes into mainstream historic preservation concepts.

The challenge for BCD is "to transform the building sector from being major contributors of greenhouse gas emissions (currently responsible for 48 percent) and working to curb global warming by reducing new and existing building carbon emissions" according to the BCD bulletin.

The house at 211 2nd St. has been retrofitted with kitchen cabinets with no added urea form-

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aldehyde, construction materials with low volatile organic compounds, LED lighting, Energy Star appliances and added living space via modern redesign.

Environmentally friendly water pipes, toilets and a host of additional green goal-oriented designs can be seen in every room. Redesigned for extra living space has been thought out down to shelving being recessed into walls accessible by opening what appears to be cabinet doors much, like a streamlined aircraft.

A second home on Lossing Avenue in the works for the next re-design.

BCD's Tania Shand has a rich history of converting not only single homes but entire communities as her background includes association with the General Services Administration (GSA) and a decade of being a congressional staffer and Staff Director of the House Government Reform Committee, Sub-Committee on Civil Service, Postal Service and the District of Columbia.

Her last five years in Washington D.C. were as Director of the Office of Personnel Management's Office of Congressional, Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs.

In 1998, Shand purchased an 1878 Empire home, which sat empty for 20 years. It was Shand's efforts to restore the home while preserving its architecture and period design that ignited her passion to eye revitalizing entire communities.

Shand received the first award from the Mayor of the District of Columbia for Residential Historic Preservation.

Since then, Shan has been the recipient of a multitude of awards and recognitions for her go-green retro-design.

Shand has been involved in some of the most breathtaking community restoration and preservation projects that have turned neighborhoods of disrepair, blight and relics of what were the homes of a beautiful city turned to ruin and high crime back into the strikingly impressive homes of yesteryear, but with green modernity.

Shand partnered with a number of experts in the eco-friendly construction field to found a female African-American venture that brings sustainability and positive impact with eco-friendly designs creating beautiful spaces to communities that enhance quality of life.

Shand brings her drive and commitment to Colonial Beach as the result of an extraordinary journey that had her searching town-to-town based on the writings of a Washington Post journalist who did the same and wrote of communities and small town discoveries which were unknown to city folks and suburban dwellers.

Shan visited many small towns in search of a special community "that had it all" and the potential for more, and her journey of Colonial Beach to fit the bill.

Shand's search ended at Colonial Beach.

In an interview with Shand, she marveled 'at the beaches that the public can access that are not blocked by private piers, docks and boat ramps' and "only 90 minutes from the hub of Washington D.C.' and the metropolitan area.

Shand decided her future for green, eco-friendly, design friendly, retro-fit concepts that maintains original architecture would begin by purchasing the home at 211 2nd Street and grow outward from this seminal effort to 'bring new concepts and ideas to this type of town.'

Shand will not stop at bringing new concepts to old homes; she has assembled 11 professional type folks to create 'Colonial Beach Commons,' which will endeavor to help Colonial Beach improve the infrastructure to include green areas for children to play and create an atmosphere that has activities that appeal to every age group."

Shand feels a lot can be done to make Colonial beach a destination area and has determined that much must be done to accommodate visitors such as lodging and focusing on current and new attractions.

One of Shand's ideas is "to create destinations for corporate visitors in a beautiful, resort style town close to Washington D.C."