From Restoration to *Rebuilding*

Cynthia Bennett & Associates evolves to meet the community's needs

By Alicia Venter

Since its founding in 1981, Cynthia Bennett & Associates has been best known for its meticulous restorations — and with over a thousand homes transformed across Pasadena, San Marino, La Cañada, South Pasadena and Altadena, the firm's legacy speaks for itself. Each project honors architectural history while seamlessly adapting homes for modern living.

However, after the Eaton Fire devastated parts of Altadena earlier this year, the firm was called to expand its mission. Homeowners who had lost everything began reaching out, asking if Cynthia Bennett & Associates could help them rebuild. Today, the company is completing its first full rebuild for a longtime client — reaffirming its commitment to restoring both homes and hope within the community.

"It's really nice to help out because it was so devastating for all these people to lose their homes," said owner Carolien Fehmers. "A lot of people are deciding not to rebuild, but for those who are, it's deeply emotional — they're just longing to get back home."

Fehmers took the helm in 2020, following the retirement of her mother and company founder, Cynthia Bennett — one of the first female general contractors in Southern California. More than 40 years later, Fehmers remains among the few women leading in the field of general contracting.

"We're very hands-on," Fehmers explained. "All my clients have my cell number. They can call me anytime. I'm at the job sites every day and know exactly what's going on. Larger firms tend to have layers of people — a project manager here, a supervisor there — but we stay personal and involved."

Under her leadership, the firm continues to specialize in revitalizing architectural gems throughout the San Gabriel Valley. From Spanish Revival bungalows to Craftsman estates, Cynthia Bennett & Associates focuses on preserving historic character while updating homes for comfort, safety, and sustainability.

That might mean installing authentic terra-cotta tile floors while discreetly upgrading plumbing and electrical systems or opening rooms and creating indoor-outdoor flow — all while maintaining the architectural integrity that gives each property its soul.

"We look at how to preserve the original architecture and style of the house," Fehmers said. "We don't change it — we just make it current."

As a full-service design-build firm, Cynthia Bennett & Associates handles every step of the process — from architectural planning and permitting to construction, interiors, window treatments and furnishings. The company is also deeply committed to eco-conscious building, ensuring projects are completed with sustainability in mind.

Rebuilding, Fehmers admits, brings a refreshing simplicity compared to restoring century-old structures.

"A new build is almost headache-free because everything's brand new," she said. "It's a blank slate — we're still designing a home that looks and feels like an older one, but without the surprises behind the walls."

While rebuilding may be a new chapter for Cynthia Bennett & Associates, it's one that comes naturally.

"This is an incredible opportunity," Fehmers says. "There are so many homes in need of rebuilding, and honestly, it's no more difficult than tackling a complex remodel. We enjoy the mix — taking on remodeling projects challenge us to think creatively within existing spaces, while new builds give us the freedom to bring a vision to life from the ground up."

For more information, visit cynthiabennett.com.



Carolien Fehmers took over Cynthia Bennett & Associates from her mother in 2020, continuing to provide quality service to the community.



A finished kitchen remodel by Cynthia Bennett & Associates.

Carolein Fehmers/Submitted