

# THE BIG MOVE

To save a local Mid Century Modern gem from demolition, a Raleigh, North Carolina couple accomplishes the incredible feat of moving the house across town to their own property, and with a respectful renovation, breathes new life into the home.

By Laura Shimko | Photography by Art Howard



**DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR** desperate measures. When a Mid Mod gem located in Raleigh's Country Club Hills, known as the Weber House, was slated to be torn down by new owners to make way for a more practical contemporary home, it sparked outrage and sadness from the local MCM enthusiast community. That was when Melinda and Andy Knowles stepped up. After watching many of the original Mid Mod homes in the area get knocked down, and historic architectural jewels lost, they were eager to preserve what they could of the area's Mid Century Modern heritage. This led them to take on a seemingly impossible task – moving the house from its original location to their own property to restore it.

Both Melinda and Andy have long been admirers of Mid Mod design. "I grew up in the 60s and I remember noticing these houses that didn't look like what I grew up in," Melinda says. "I loved the sloped and flat roofs, clean lines, and oversized windows." Andy likewise discovered his passion for

MCM architecture and design when he moved from small-town Georgia to Atlanta. "I was fascinated by a nearby neighborhood there that featured modern architecture with lots of windows, and flat or sloping rooves," he says. It was only natural when the couple moved from Atlanta to Raleigh in the late '90s that they would be on the lookout for their own atomic home. "Andy and I bought our first Mid Century Modern house in the early 2000s, and that's when I really began to understand what it felt like to live in one," Melinda says. They masterfully restored and renovated both their 1954 home and their current 1967 home, shedding light on their passion for preservation.

#### LOCAL ICON

When they moved to Raleigh, the couple immediately noticed the abundance of MCM homes. This was due to the presence of the NC State University's School of Design. "It was dedicated to exclusively teaching the principles of modernist architecture throughout the 50's, 60's and 70's – turning out many



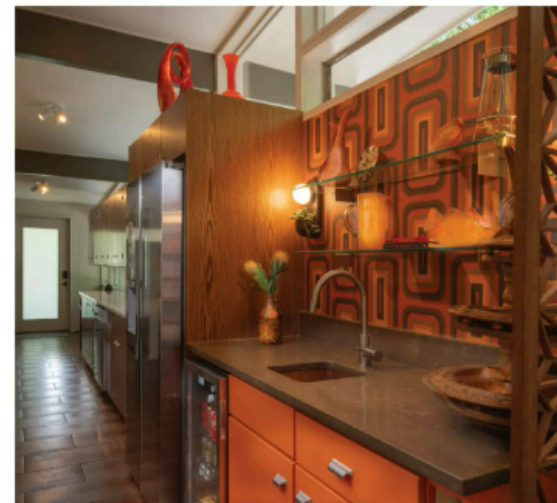
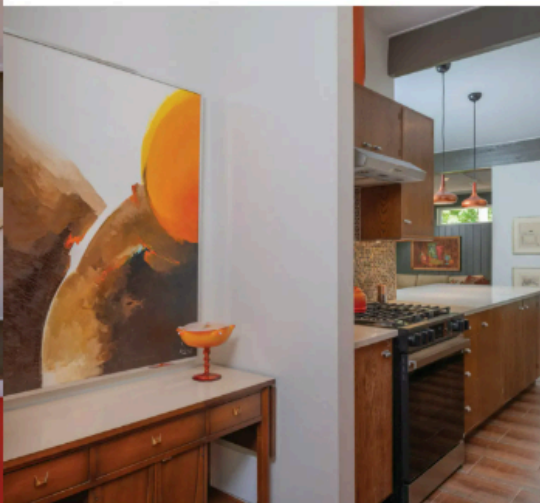


noteworthy modernist architects whose designs can be seen throughout North Carolina," says Melinda. They lived in a 1954 build around the corner from the Weber House for twenty years, admiring it as they passed.

William ("Bill") Weber, a noted architect in the modernist movement of Raleigh, designed the home for his family in 1954. He collaborated with George Matsumoto, a notable architect and professor of architecture at NCSU. "There was historic significance to the iconic design that made preservationists in the area take note," says Melinda. The Weber family lived in the home for 15 years. After that, three other owners lived in the home over the decades. The original design drawings in the Matsumoto archive at the NCSU library and a magazine article from the time give insight into the early years of the house. The last resident before Melinda and Andy, Joanna Johnson, was also the longest to live in the home at 40 years. "She was responsible for the primary bedroom addition that was thoughtfully done in the 1980s," says Melinda. An NCSU School of Architecture alum, Meg McLaurin, designed it.

**below:** It was Melinda and Andy's goal to furnish the home with as many period pieces as they could find. "A great deal of care was put into furnishing the house with era specific furniture," says Melinda. "We were able to source many beautiful, classic mid-century pieces throughout the home. In fact, the only new pieces are the living room sectional and the upstairs pull-out sofa bed. Everything else is vintage mid-century." Here in the den, some notable pieces are the Douglas-Eaton lounge chair and Jean-Paul Barray Penta Chair for Bofinger.





#### RESCUE OPERATION

The news was out – the Weber home had been sold, and the new owners wanted a fresh slate to design a new house to meet their needs. When Melinda and Andy heard that the home was to be demolished, they immediately began concocting a rescue plan. “Andy and I started scheming about trying to have it moved to a lot we owned adjacent to our similarly designed mid-century home across town,” says Melinda. “As it turns out, we had already been contemplating building a rental property on the lot that would complement our house – and what could be a better complement than this iconic piece of Raleigh’s history?” With two other total home renovations under their belts, they were ready to take on another.

The question was how. The planning process was long and arduous, involving many moving pieces – quite literally – and cooperation and coordination with several departments of local government. Working with Wolfe House and Building Movers, they would move the home through the streets of Raleigh. They ran into a nearly insurmountable



As part of preserving the past, almost all of the home’s hardware is original, as are all the cabinet fronts. “In reconstructing the main level, we had to do some work on the original kitchen cabinets because a lot of it was built in place, so the framework had to be rebuilt,” says Melinda. Several updates to the kitchen feel native to the home, blending seamlessly with original features. “The kitchen countertops could not be reused, so we opted for a creamy quartz to replace the black Formica that was original, which brightened up the space,” she says. “A copper penny tile was used on the kitchen backsplash and the wet bar has a chocolate quartz countertop with a cool retro wallpaper.”



obstacle when height and width limits precluded the move. They came to a solution; they would take the upper level in pieces and the key features of the main level (staircase, fireplace, windows and doors). The foundation had to be redone at any rate, so they decided to reconstruct the main level at the new location and place the upper level on top.

The moving process caused quite the buzz in Raleigh and required three different crews to accompany the pieces to ensure powerlines and other potential obstacles were removed from the home's path. As the home completed the final leg of the journey up the hill to Melinda and Andy's property, a crowd of local Mid Mod enthusiasts and neighbors had gathered to watch and celebrate. One of those present was Bill Weber, the son of the original architect, who came to see the final resting place of the home where he spent the first formative years of his life.



**"THERE WAS HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ICONIC DESIGN THAT MADE PRESERVATIONISTS IN THE AREA TAKE NOTE,"**

above: In the hall bathroom, a mix of old and new give a fun twist on Mid Mod design. Two drawings by Maureen King, @faceit2383 (Commerce, GA) grace the wall and add unique flair to the space. **bottom, left:** Filling the home with vintage furniture was a priority for Melinda and Andy. The primary bedroom features a 1960s Broyhill Premier Brasilia dresser. **bottom right:** The built-in shelving upstairs contains a treasure trove of vintage planters from the era. "My niece in California is an avid collector and most were donated to the Weber House by her," says Melinda.






Melinda and Andy wanted to stay true to the Mid Mod roots of the home, including the palette. “The color scheme of the Weber House was inspired by the chimney pipes, which we found out were originally orange,” says Melinda. “This is a particular feature that George Matsumoto used in many of his houses and he always specified the orange paint. We also knew that Mrs. Weber told her husband he could design whatever kind of house he wanted, but she wanted it to have a turquoise door.”



**FINAL PRICE TAG**  
**MELINDA AND ANDY ESTIMATE**  
**THE TOTAL COST OF THE MOVE**  
**AND RENOVATION WAS AROUND**  
**\$670,000. OF THAT AMOUNT,**  
**ABOUT \$123,000 WAS FOR**  
**NON-RENOVATION COSTS –**  
**THE WOLFE MOVERS, BUILDING**  
**PERMIT (\$10,880), AND**  
**UTILITY/TELECOM TRUCKS**  
**THAT ACCOMPANIED THE MOVE.**





THEY RAN INTO A NEARLY INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLE WHEN HEIGHT AND WIDTH LIMITS PRECLUDED THE MOVE. THEY CAME TO A SOLUTION: **THEY WOULD TAKE THE UPPER LEVEL IN PIECES AND THE KEY FEATURES OF THE MAIN LEVEL (STAIRCASE, FIREPLACE, WINDOWS AND DOORS).**

# PROJECT NOTEBOOK

**Year Built:** 1954  
**Location:** Raleigh, North Carolina  
**Original Architect:** William "Bill" Weber in collaboration with George Matsumoto  
**Square Footage:** 1,700  
**Bedrooms:** 2  
**Bathrooms:** 2  
**Years of Renovation:** 2024 - 2026  
**Length of Renovation:** 2 years

## ENGINEERING A HOME RELOCATION

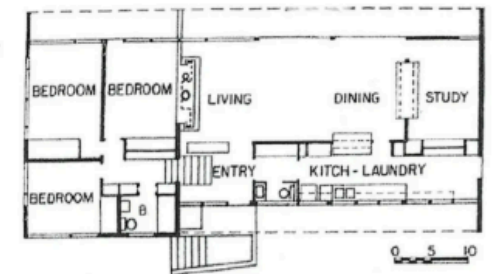
Moving a house is an endeavor not for the faint of heart. When Melinda and Andy Knowles embarked on their ambitious house rescue plan, there were a number of steps they had to complete to complete the move successfully.

- **Location.** To begin, Melinda and Andy had to choose the new resting place for the home. This would determine not only how the home would sit on their property, but also what elements of the house would be kept original, and what would need to be reconstructed. "We owned the lot adjacent to our house that had never been developed and was primarily wooded, so that was an obvious choice in terms of location," says Melinda. "We wanted it located as close to the street as possible to preserve the wooded lot behind it."
- **Negotiating.** The deed for the home had to be obtained from the new owners, and their blessing given to take extra time to move it, which ended up impacting and delaying their own construction plans. "They received a fair amount of kickback from the community, so they were happy to accommodate our request to move the house — as long as we could do it in a timely manner," says Melinda.
- **Planning.** Melinda and Andy worked closely with the Raleigh Historic Preservation and Planning departments in order to find a way to move the house piece by piece through the street. "We had multiple meetings with them and they scouted and measured the width and height of several potential move routes," says Melinda.
- **Permitting.** Before the move could begin, Melinda and Andy had to devise a way to move the house without violating local laws and codes. The city provided the size limitations, and they worked hard to come up with a plan of keeping within those parameters. "Initially, we had hoped to move the entire house intact," says Melinda. "It turned out that the maximum height and width just couldn't move through the city streets and intersections." The solution was to break the home up into smaller parts for the upper floor, and then carefully breakdown and transport the elements from the main living spaces to be rebuilt back into the home.
- **Coordinating.** One of the most daunting tasks was coordinating with local government and the private sector to ensure the move would go off without a hitch. "We were surprised that we had to hire 3 different utility trucks to ride along with us and raise the wires to let the house go through — one for the power lines, one for the telecom lines, and one for the city streetlights — at significant cost to us," says Melinda.
- **Moving.** Physically completing the move required lots of time, effort and dedication. As the home's pieces made their way across town, they had to duck and dodge power lines overhead. On the last stretch of uphill road, the tractor's motor was no longer adequate, and so the self-powered dollies under the house were utilized.



## ECONOMICAL CONSTRUCTION, OPEN PLAN

*House for Mr. & Mrs. William Weber  
 Raleigh, North Carolina  
 William Weber, Architect  
 George Matsumoto, Consultant*





**above:** The color scheme for the home is inspired by retro shades. Here in the primary bedroom, a custom pink shade and other feminine touches are an homage to Joanna Johnson, who resided in the home from 1982 to 2023, and was responsible for engaging Meg McLaurin to design the primary bedroom addition.

**Below:** Dazzling Fauvist Flock wallpaper sparkles in the primary bathroom, once again mixing retro and modern palettes and sensibilities.



#### KEEPING IT ORIGINAL

Once in the new location, the reconstruction and renovation process began. "The foundation had to be rebuilt for the entire house," says Melinda. "And since the topography was a bit different from the original, we ended up with a significantly taller foundation on the left and rear end of the house underneath the primary suite addition. This allowed us to put a studio apartment in that space where it had only been a crawl space before." After the foundation was complete, they started to rebuild the main level and attach the upper level with the bedrooms and bathrooms. They utilized original blueprints and modified them to adapt to local permit requirements as well as the new topography.

They approached the interior renovation respectfully and lovingly with the goal of changing as little as possible. Upstairs, this involved refinishing hardwood flooring and replacing carpeting in the bedrooms, refreshing the paint and wallcoverings, and replac-

ing the tile surrounding an original tub. On the main level, the original cabinetry had to be rebuilt, laundry room moved upstairs, a wet bar added, the fixed glass replaced with insulated glass (though original windows and doors were left single pane). As much as possible, the original elements were preserved, honoring the home's roots and historic significance. The home is now available on Airbnb as a Mid Mod oasis for visitors to downtown Raleigh.

After the move and renovation were finished, Andy and Melinda invited all of the previous owners and their families to come tour the house in December of 2025. Three out of the four families attended. "It was a very special reunion," Melinda says. 🌟

---

Guests can stay at the Weber house to experience its history and design first hand.  
Visit [weberhousemcm.com](http://weberhousemcm.com) for details.

---

