SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026

# 5 WEST

Celebrating the 5 Tou ern Wake

## FALL FASHION

Dressed up, dialed in, and ready for wherever the season leads

INSIDE THE 2026 PARADE OF HOMES | RETHINKING RETAIL WITH CHEYENNE LEVINSON | STELLAR'S RECIPE FOR COMMUNITY

+

LEADERS IN MODERN MEDICINE

APEX | CARY | FUQUAY-VARINA | HOLLY SPRINGS | MORRISVILLE

70 Years of Home



A BUILDER YOU CAN TRUST

## Discover Brookfield Residential Homes in Wendell

For 70 years, Brookfield Residential has been creating thoughtfully designed homes built for the way people truly live. Now, that legacy continues in Wendell Falls® and Ponder™—two vibrant Wendell communities where homebuyers can discover Brookfield Residential homes with curated finishes, refined style, and elevated details throughout.



### WENDELL FALLS®

**New Townhomes From $299,990**
**& Single-Family Homes From the Upper $300's**

- Single-Family Homes with 3–5 Beds, 2.5–4.5 Baths, and up to 2,800+ sq. ft.
- Townhomes with 3 Beds, 2.5 Baths, and up to 1,650 sq. ft.
- Multiple Pools & 24/7 Fitness Center
- Playgrounds, Parks, Trails & Dog Park
- Shopping & Dining at Nearby Treelight Square, Including Publix®
- Located Just 3 Miles to Downtown Wendell & 15 Miles to Downtown Raleigh

**1301 Barreto Dr., Wendell, NC 27591 | 919.586.8480**

**LIMITED-TIME SAVINGS**
Ask About Special Limited-Time Incentives*

**TOUR 4 DECORATED MODELS AT WENDELL FALLS**

### PONDER™ GRAND OPENING THIS FALL!

**New Single-Family Homes From the $300's**

- Single-Family Homes with 3–5 Beds, 3–5 Baths, and up to 2,800+ sq. ft.
- Lake Ponder for Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, and Lakeside Camping
- Ponder House with Fitness Center, Fire Pit, and Gathering Spaces
- Community Pool, Pickleball Courts, Pocket Parks, Playgrounds, and a Dog Park
- Multi-Use Pathways & Trails
- Shopping & Dining at Nearby Treelight Square, Including Publix®
- Located Just 10 Minutes to Downtown Wendell and Zebulon, 20 Miles to Downtown Raleigh, and 34 Miles to Raleigh-Durham International Airport



**BrookfieldResidential.com/5West**

Prices, plans, elevations, included features, dimensions, square feet, amenities, availability, and terms and incentives are approximate and are all subject to change without notice. All photos, renderings, and other depictions are for illustration purposes only and are subject to change without notice and may include elements that are for display purposes only. *Offers subject to change and cancellation without notice and requires the use of builders preferred lender and title company. Select photos are by NASH Wendell Falls, LLC and NB Ammons Acres, LLC. 2026 Ponder. All Rights Reserved. Ponder is a trademark of NB Ammons Acres LLC, and may not be copied, imitated or used, in whole or in part, without prior written permission. 2026 Brookfield Residential ULC. All rights reserved. 9/26

Brookfield Residential




# All bundled up: print + digital.

# One deal.

With our **print + digital bundles,** you can maximize your reach with one simple investment.

5 WEST
Celebrating the 5 Towns of Western Wake

A RALEIGH LIFESTYLE
MIDTOWN

**5westmag.com/advertise**




# EDITOR'S LETTER



Maybe it's the art school kid in me, but I'll always linger over gorgeous typography, elegant architecture, or a beautifully tailored jacket. Good design—in all its forms—has always fascinated me.

It's why this issue was especially fun to put together. It's devoted to two of my favorite subjects: homes and fashion.

Our Fall Fashion feature celebrates the season with a fresh mix of men's and women's looks, anchored by timeless pieces from Raleigh Denim and Bunbury Custom Clothiers. We were fortunate to photograph the spread at one of the stunning private homes featured on this year's Triangle Parade of Homes. It was an ideal backdrop for clothing that's as thoughtfully crafted as the spaces surrounding it.

That home also serves as the gateway to our second feature, which explores one of the Triangle Parade of Homes. You'll learn about the history behind the annual event, meet several of the builders responsible for this year's standout residences, and get an early look at the design trends shaping the homes of tomorrow.

The design conversation continues with Dathan Kazsuk's interview with George Smart, founder and CEO of USModernist, on the importance of preserving and celebrating modern architecture. Also in this issue, you'll find our special section, Leaders in Modern Medicine, highlighting the physicians, practices, and healthcare innovators helping cement the Triangle's reputation as one of the nation's premier destinations for exceptional care.

At first glance, this issue may look like a celebration of beautiful homes, stylish clothing, and inspiring places. And it is. But it's also a portrait of a region confidently stepping into its creative era. For decades, the Triangle has been known for its universities, research institutions, and medical breakthroughs. Today, it's equally defined by talented designers, entrepreneurs, and storytellers who are shaping not just what our communities look like, but how they live, gather, and express themselves.

That's a story worth celebrating—and one we're proud to tell.



Taylor Bowler
Editor

# bluewaterspa

*Voted **Best Medical Spa** every year since 2018*



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLASTIC SURGEONS

Michael Law MD,
**Voted Best Plastic Surgeon in the Triangle every year since 2018,**
owns and operates Blue Water Spa.



SCAN ME

***Award-Winning Medical Spa*** specializing in
Transformative, Safe & Effective Services

Natural Looking Neurotoxin, Filler, PRF & Lasers
for ALL Skin Types

WRAL VOTERS' CHOICE AWARDS · 5 WEST 2026 DIAMOND AWARDS GOLD WINNER · MIDTOWN 2026 DIAMOND AWARDS GOLD WINNER · INDY BEST OF THE TRIANGLE 2025 · INDY BEST OF THE TRIANGLE 2025 · 2026 MAGGY AWARDS WINNER · wake living READERS' CHOICE AWARD · AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLASTIC SURGEONS

**bluewaterspa.com • TEXT 919.769.6044 • @bluewatersparaleigh**

North Raleigh + Brier Creek Locations




5 WEST 2026 DIAMOND AWARDS
GOLD WINNER
BEST STEAKHOUSE





Discover an enchanting steakhouse where the spirit of the French Quarter in New Orleans comes alive in every bite. Experience a culinary masterpiece as our skilled chefs craft tender, perfectly cooked steaks that redefine excellence. Immerse yourself in the ambiance of our classic French Quarter-style covered courtyard, where celebration permeates every corner.

At Rey's, we blend the allure of the French Quarter with the artistry of steak and seafood to deliver a dining experience. Come indulge in the magic.

1130 Buck Jones Rd. Raleigh, NC
919.380.0122
reysrestaurant.com

Voted "Best Pizza" in Western Wake for five years in a row!

5 WEST 2026 DIAMOND AWARDS
GOLD WINNER
BEST PIZZA






DI FARA
PIZZA TAVERN
BKLYN STYLE
CARY, NC

111 East Chatham Street, Cary,
North Carolina 27511
difarapizzatavern.com



5 WEST
Celebrating the 5 Towns of Western Wake

**FOUNDER**
Ronny Stephens

**PUBLISHER**
Joe Sanger

**EDITOR**
Taylor Bowler

**ART DIRECTOR**
Sean Byrne

**LIFESTYLE EDITOR & SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER**
Dathan Kazsuk

**COPY EDITOR**
Amanda Lea

**SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER**
Jordan Daniels

**AD PRODUCTION MANAGER**
Cyndi Harris

**DIRECTOR OF SALES**
Collin Pruitt

**ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE**
Mackenzie Steiner

**STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**
Jessica Bratton

**FASHION STYLIST**
Sofia Lujan

**DISTRIBUTION**
Liam Fulkerson, Manager
DistribuTech.net

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**
Samantha Carson
Amanda Lamb



*5 West* magazine is published six times annually. Any reproduction in part or in whole of any part of this publication is prohibited without the express written consent of the publisher. Copyright 2026. All rights reserved.

*5 West* magazine is not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, photography or art. Unsolicited material is welcome and is considered intended for publication. Such material becomes the property of the magazine and is subject to editing. *5 West* magazine will not knowingly accept any real estate advertising in violation of U.S. equal opportunity law.

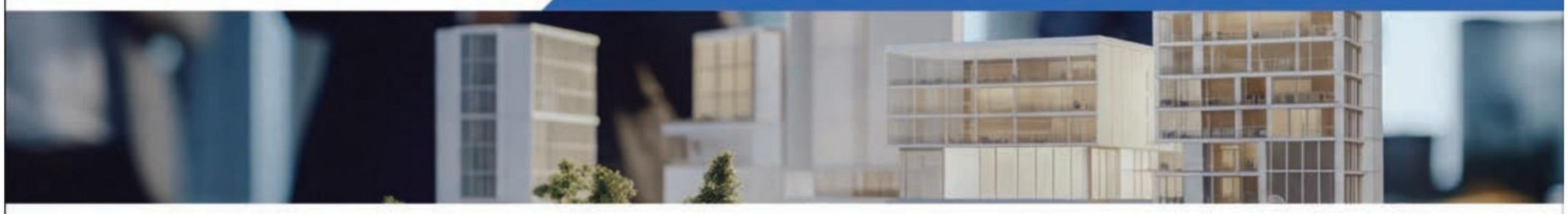


**SUBSCRIPTIONS**
6 print issues (1 year)
Available online at 5westmag.com

1053 E. Whitaker Mill Road
Raleigh, NC 27604
Phone: 919.782.4710
Fax: 919.782.4763

PDM Funding

*If The Bank Says "NO" Give Me A Call*



## 100% FINANCING: Large Domestic & International Projects
## New Projects or Expansion – Minimum Loan Amount of 25 Million US Dollars

### TWO METHODS OF FINANCING

- **SBLC**: The loan is guaranteed by a strong financial institution, generally one of the major banks.
- **Cash Method**: Joint Venture or Debt – Both require a deposit of 30% that will be returned upon project completion (minimum of 2 years)
  a) **Joint Venture**: Lender will require an Equity Portion. Payments will never be made under this method.
  b) **Debt**: Generally not preferred but considered on a case by case basis.

### ADDITIONAL FUNDING PROGRAMS

- **Invoice Factoring**: We advance 75% to 95% of your customer invoices. ***Let US wait the 30 TO 90 DAYS FOR PAYMENT!***
- **Equipment Financing**: We finance Computer Systems, Construction Equipment, Trucking and more. Generally 100% Financing.
- **Credit Card Processing**: Simple, Predictable and Affordable.



**PONCE D. MOODY: Funding Facilitator**
Cell: 919.771.3230 • pdmfunding.net • ponce@poncemoody.com • PO Box 61151 • Raleigh, NC 27661-1151

IRON ACADEMY

# What Are You Willing to Fight For... As a Parent?



## AT IRON ACADEMY, WE FIGHT WITH YOU TO RAISE GOD-HONORING YOUNG MEN.

You don't have to do it alone. Raising boys in today's world is tough. At Iron Academy, we partner with families to raise future men of courage, wisdom, and conviction.

### WE FIGHT:

- For God-honoring character
- For deep thinkers and compassionate leaders
- For strong husbands and wise fathers
- For joyful, confident young men

All-male. Christian. 6th–12th Grade.
Joyful and focused.

### JOIN THE FIGHT FOR YOUR SON'S FUTURE.

Take a tour.
Meet our faculty.
Discover the difference.

3510 Edwards Mill Road,
Raleigh, NC 27612

(919) 977-8811

info@ironacademy.org

Together, we build men.

# CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026

## FEATURES


**36 FALL FASHION**
Dressed up, dialed in, and ready for wherever the season leads

**47 THE TRIANGLE PARADE OF HOMES**
A rare look inside the houses, communities, and design ideas defining the future of the region


## DEPARTMENTS


**16 KALEIDOSCOPE**
George Smart on the fight to preserve North Carolina's modernist homes

**22 SIP & SAVOR**
Stellar aims to be Five Points' Living Room

**24 STYLE**
Cheyenne Levinson makes the case for sustainability and secondhand shopping


## IN EVERY ISSUE


**2 FROM THE EDITOR**

**8 TALK OF THE TOWNS**
Social Scene
The Buzz
Dining Guide
Event Calendar

**56 THE SPACE BETWEEN**

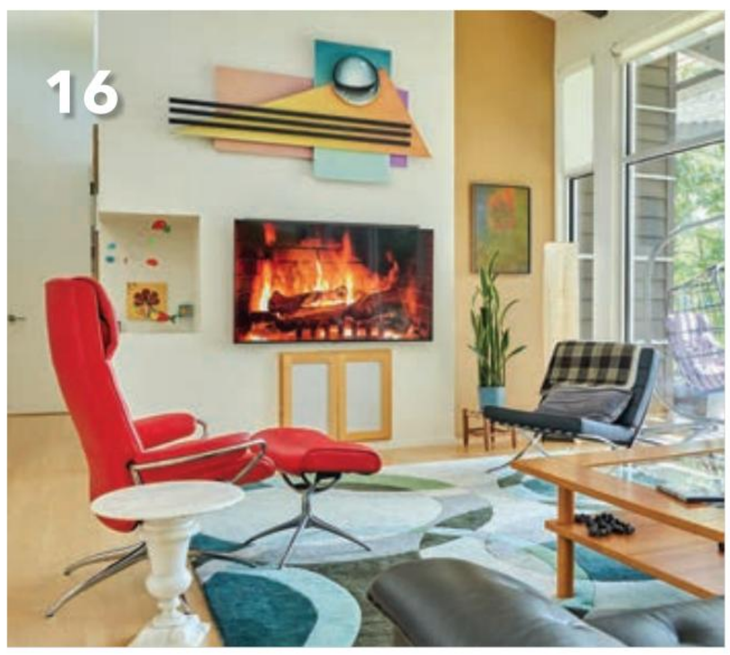
















## SPECIAL SECTION


**27** LEADERS IN MODERN MEDICINE


ON THE COVER




Models Shelton Jones and Marissa Landis for our Fall Fashion Feature, shot at a private residence in Raleigh's Forty Acres neighborhood.

Photo by Jessica Bratton.

# GRACE
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

ACSI EXEMPLARY ACCREDITED



Transitional Kindergarten - 12th Grade
www.gracechristian.net
Known · Valued · *Loved*



# THE *Halle* CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

## CLASSICAL CONCERT SERIES
**Sep 13 / 3pm**
Spend a Sunday with great classical musicians!
Thron-Larkin Duo
*Music for Cello & Piano*
Tickets: $12-$18(+tax)

## DRIVE-IN MOVIE AT THE PARK
**Oct 16 / Dusk**
**"Hocus Pocus"**
Join us for a fun drive-in movie night at Pleasant Park!
Tickets: $10(+tax) per car

## APEX COMMUNITY DANCE
**Sep 18 / 7pm-9pm**
**Oct 23 / 7pm-9pm**
Dances are walked through by a live caller and band! A ll ages and abilities are welcome!
Tickets: $2(+tax)

## GOBLIN'S GROOVE
**Oct 24 / 5pm-7pm**
Join us for frightfully fun music from every decade, festive games, creepy-cute crafts, and Halloween treats!
Tickets: $2-$5(+tax)

## "DRINKING HABITS" BY TOM SMITH
**Oct 2, 3, 9, 10 / 7:30pm**
**Oct 4 & 11 / 3pm**
Join us at The Halle for this year's Fall Play full of hilarity and fun!
Tickets: $12-$18(+tax)

## GHOST STORIES
**October 28**
6PM-Kid's Show
8:30PM-Adult 18+ Show
Hear tales from Donna Washington, an internationally acclaimed, award winning storyteller!
Tickets: $12-$18(+tax)

Tickets for events available at The Halle box office, over the phone, or on etix.com

## FAMILY PUMPKIN PAINTING
**Oct 3 / 10:30am-1pm**
Bring your friends and family for a festive, creative time together!
$5 per pumpkin
Registration #20707

## SCARECROW ROW
**Oct 22 / 5pm-7pm**
Build your own scarecrow and check out all the community-decorated scarecrow displays from October 23 through 31!
FREE to register at apexnc.org

919.249.1120 | 237 N. SALEM STREET HISTORIC DOWNTOWN APEX | THEHALLE.ORG





Joshua Manning Adventure Photography | josh@marketingisstorytelling.com | in studio | on location







**Let's be social!**

**Follow us for all of the don't-miss events in Raleigh.**

@MIDTOWNMAGAZINE

GalaxyCon returned to the Raleigh Convention Center July 23–26, drawing thousands of movie, television, comic book and cosplay fans downtown for collectibles, costumes, celebrity meet-and-greets and fan Q&A sessions. Featured guests included, from top, 95-year-old Star Trek legend William Shatner; Hayden Christensen, known for portraying Anakin Skywalker and Darth Vader; and The Office stars Angela Kins y and Rainn Wilson.







*Midtown* magazine welcomed guests to a Mix & Mingle event Thursday, July 23, at Art-Source Fine Art & Framing in Raleigh's North Hills. Attendees enjoyed charcuterie provided by Sixty Vines, craft beer from Raleigh's Sneaky Penguin Brewing Company and wine from Adagio Vineyards in Elkin while connecting with members of the local community. Surrounded by ArtSource's collection of local and regional artwork, the gallery provided a colorful and inviting backdrop for an evening of conversation, food, drinks, and networking.

BY DATHAN KAZSUK




Lance Hiatt and Tim Parks, owners of Marked Tree Vineyard in Flat Rock, spent a week in the Triangle this July visiting local wine shops to showcase their award-winning wines. Their tour included stops at Saint Pierre in Raleigh, RBF in Cary and Fearrington Village in Pittsboro. Pictured here, the pair hosted a sparkling wine tasting at RBF.



Sisters Shelby Vaughn and Ashley Chambers have combined their backgrounds in hair, skin care and wellness to create Alter Scalp Spa in north Raleigh's Falls River community. The coastal-inspired retreat features private treatment suites and a signature 55-minute experience that incorporates scalp massage, warm waterfall therapy, cleansing, exfoliation and conditioning—offering guests a relaxing escape without leaving Raleigh.



GalaxyCon Raleigh returned Thursday, July 23, with founder and president Mike Broder, Raleigh Mayor Janet Cowell and actors Pam Grier, Bobcat Goldthwait, Tim Kazurinsky and Chris Bartlett helping officially launch the annual celebration with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Once the ribbon fell, crowds of costumed fans poured into the vendor hall to explore hundreds of artists, creators, collectibles dealers and pop-culture exhibitors. Pictured are "Police Academy" veterans Kazurinsky and Goldthwait, who joined the opening-day festivities.



Guests gathered for a hard-hat preview of Durham's newest speakeasy, Red Phone Booth, ahead of its August opening. Durham co-owners Ralph Mensah and Michael Thomas welcomed media and influencers inside for an exclusive first look. Attendees also heard from Red Phone Booth founder Stephen De Haan and investor and The Walking Dead star Michael Cudlitz (pictured).




Local wine enthusiast Jeff Bramwell celebrated the release of his latest book, On the Road in Piemonte with Winemakers, Farmers & Chefs. Spanning two volumes and more than 1,000 pages, the collection features interviews, photography, recipes and stories inspired by Bramwell's travels through Italy's renowned wine region. Learn more or purchase a copy at piemontebook.com.

# PITCH PERFECT

## Apex singer-songwriter's music strikes the right notes

BY KURT DUSTERBERG

Emma Fornes credits her family for nearly every step in her budding music career.

The NC State University senior remembers taking part in her mother's mommy-and-me music class as a toddler. By age 4, she was taking piano lessons. "My parents saw me light up with music," she says.

At first, the piano was a mixed blessing for an elementary school kid who wanted to grab a pencil and try her hand at songwriting. "I would put a sheet of paper on the piano, and I would dig in," Fornes recalls with a laugh. "You can literally see the lyrics and the chords. My dad flipped out because he saved up so much for that piano."

Today, all is forgiven. Fornes, who goes by Emma Rae in musical circles, is taking the first steps in her professional career. The singer-songwriter has officially recorded one of her original songs, "The Chase." The ballad is a remembrance of a past romance, full of mature vocals and elegant piano work. While the song has a contemporary feel, Fornes is grounded in another era.

"My dad was very insistent on oldies music being the best music," she says. "I always looked up to Billy Joel and Elton John because I felt like they were pioneers for pop-based piano singers. Their work is honestly my holy grail."

Fornes, who grew up in Apex, admits that writing lyrics is still a bit of a hurdle. "I'm a very music-first person," she says. "I do struggle with lyrics. I've never been a super confident writer. A lot of it is learning what I want to say and the message I want to bring to the world."

This summer, Fornes has plenty of gigs lined up. In addition to playing local eateries and private events, she will headline a Rhythm & Reels concert at the Apex Nature Park Amphitheatre on August 15. She's even landed several restaurant dates at North Carolina beaches. It's a good start for a musician with big dreams.




Singer-songwriter Emma Fornes will headline the Rhythm & Reels concert in Apex on August 15. Photo courtesy of Emma Fornes.

"There's the lofty goal of making it, which for me would be touring around the country and around the world professionally with my own music," she says. "But I have to pay my rent and put dinner on the table."

For now, Fornes will go where the music takes her, with the same confidence she had when she wrote her first song, "Firefly," at age 5. She recalls the lyrics easily.

*Let me be your firefly*
*Just shining through the night*
*Let me be your firefly*
*Just making life so bright*

"Honestly, it was really cute," Fornes says. "I don't think it was a bad song for a 5-year-old. But I think there was definitely some improvement to come."

**For more about Fornes' music, visit emmaraemusic.com.**

BY TAYLOR BOWLER




A group of young runners dressed in pink celebrates as they cross the finish line during a Girls on the Run 5K. Photo courtesy of Girls on the Run.

# GIRLS ON THE RUN CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Girls on the Run, a youth development program that helps girls build confidence, resilience, and a positive sense of self through running. Over the last three decades, Girls on the Run has grown from its Charlotte roots into a national movement with hundreds of teams across the country. It expanded to the Triangle in 2000 and has now served more than 2.7 million young runners nationwide.

Founded in 1996 by Molly Barker, the program was built around a simple idea: Running can be a vehicle for self-understanding and agency, not just athletic performance. That philosophy still anchors its curriculum today.

"People think of it as a training program," Barker says. "For me, it's got a lot of power. It's saying you are responsible for your fabulous body and you get to choose what is right for your body. It's encouraging agency and autonomy."

Unlike traditional sports leagues that emphasize competition, Girls on the Run blends physical activity with structured conversations about confidence, relationships, and decision-making. Coaches guide small teams of girls through practices that culminate in a celebratory 5K event—not as a test of speed, but as a shared accomplishment.

"So much of youth sports is centered around perfection," Barker says. "Girls will think, 'I'm not fast enough.' This isn't trying to make you a better runner—this is to make you a happy runner."

Studies have found that more than 50% of girls ages 6 to 8 say they want to be thinner, and by middle school, many already associate thinness with being happier or more successful. It's exactly why Girls on the Run meets girls when it does: before self-doubt has a chance to fully take hold.

Across the Triangle, the program has grown alongside the region's rapid expansion, reaching schools and community centers in both urban and suburban areas. Girls on the Run remains one of the most prominent examples of how a grassroots program took hold locally and evolved into a movement reaching millions of girls across the country.

BY DATHAN KAZSUK

# TACO TIME

Whether you're craving traditional street tacos, smoky birria, chef-driven creations, or late-night comfort food, the Triangle has no shortage of standout taco spots. **Here are 17 local spots to add to your taco rotation.**

### 13 Tacos & Taps
*10511 Shadowlawn Dr., Raleigh*
This north Raleigh favorite blends authentic Mexican flavors with creative fusion, strong margaritas, craft beer, and a taco menu that knows how to have a little fun.

### bartaco
*4121 Main at North Hills St., Suite 105, Raleigh*
More polished than a traditional taqueria, bartaco brings globally inspired tacos, cocktails, and a lively North Hills vibe to the table.

### Centro
106 S. Wilmington St., Raleigh
Centro isn't a straight-up taqueria, but its history, swagger, and devoted fan base keep it firmly in the taco mix.

### Chubby's Tacos
*Multiple locations*
A longtime local favorite with Raleigh and Durham locations, Chubby's Tacos keeps things casual with fresh tacos, birria, burritos, quesadillas, nachos, and a salsa bar that does a lot of heavy lifting.

### Esmeralda Grill
*748 E. Chatham St., Cary*
What started as a taco truck has grown into a Cary destination for authentic tacos, hearty portions, and the kind of no-nonsense flavor people will happily drive across town for.

### Fonda Lupita
*1952 S. Horner Blvd., Sanford*
Fonda Lupita has built a reputation for traditional Mexican food rooted in family recipes, with handmade corn tortillas, gorditas, roasted salsas, tacos, and margaritas that make Sanford feel a whole lot closer.

### Gonza Tacos y Tequila
*Multiple locations*
A Raleigh favorite for tacos, tequila, margaritas, and the kind of lively dinner energy that makes ordering another round feel like the correct decision.

### Gringo A Go Go
*100 N. Person St., Raleigh*
Colorful, casual, and a little playful, Gringo A Go Go is a downtown favorite for tacos, margaritas, and easygoing patio energy.

### Gym Tacos
*Multiple locations*
What began as a food truck in 2019 has become one of the Triangle's most talked-about taco names, with a loyal following and plenty of late-night taco energy.

### La Taqueria by Katsuji
*900 Park Offices Dr., Suite 100, Durham*
Chef Katsuji Tanabe's Boxyard RTP concept puts a bold, chef-driven spin on tacos, blending classic Mexican flavors with inventive combinations.

### La Vaquita
*2700 Chapel Hill Road, Durham*
More than a taco stop, La Vaquita is a Durham staple for authentic Mexican food, groceries, and the kind of community feel that makes a place stick.

### Lobera Tacos & Tequila
*2100 Hillsborough St., Unit 110, Raleigh*
Come for the tacos, stay for the tequila—and probably another round of both before anyone starts making responsible decisions.

### Los Cuates
*3505 Capital Blvd., Raleigh*
This Capital Boulevard favorite has earned a devoted local following for quesabirria tacos, traditional Mexican comfort food, and the kind of plates that don't need a filter to look good.

## FEATURE RESTAURANT



### Chido Taco Mercado Style Taqueria
*Multiple locations*
With locations in Raleigh and Cary, Chido Taco has built a loyal following for its house-made tortillas, birria tacos, and fresh-squeezed margaritas. The menu balances traditional flavors with creative twists, while the self-serve toppings bar lets diners customize every bite.

### Tacos El Calentano
*832 Old Apex Road, Cary*
This Cary go-to built its reputation on authentic street tacos, loaded tortas, and zero shortcuts.

### Taqueria El Toro
*3600 Junction Blvd., Raleigh*
The street tacos are the headliner, but the salsa bar is the scene-stealer at this casual Raleigh favorite.

### Wong's Tacos
*4251 Parklake Ave., Raleigh*
Not your traditional taco stop, Wong's Tacos brings Asian-Mexican fusion to Raleigh with bold mashups, big flavors, bao buns, bowls, and tacos that happily ignore the rulebook.

*Did we miss your favorite taco shack? Drop us a line at editor@midtownmag.com and let us know your hangout!*

BY DATHAN KAZSUK

# SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER




Koka Booth Amphitheatre's annual Whiskey, Wine & Fire will serve up the treats on Saturday, September 12. Photo by Jennifer Primrose.

### DURHAM BULLS VS. NASHVILLE SOUNDS
**September 10 | 6:45 p.m.**
**Durham Bulls Athletic Park, Durham**
A classic downtown Durham baseball night as the Bulls host Nashville late in the season.
**milb.com/durham**

### HOPSCOTCH MUSIC FESTIVAL
**September 10–12 | Shows daily**
**City Plaza, Moore Square, and venues around downtown Raleigh**
A multi-day downtown Raleigh music festival with live sets spread across outdoor stages and local venues.
**hopscotchmusicfest.com**

### FRIDAY NIGHT ON WHITE
**September 11 | 6–9 p.m.**
**S. White St., Downtown Wake Forest**
Wake Forest's free outdoor concert series with local and regional party bands, classic rock, pop, R&B, Top 40, and Motown.
**wakeforestnc.gov**

### WHISKEY, WINE & FIRE
**September 12 | 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. entry**
**Koka Booth Amphitheatre, Cary**
A fall-friendly foodie event with whiskey and wine tastings, fire-kissed barbecue, food trucks, live music, and fire pits.
**boothamphitheatre.com**

### CENTERFEST
**September 19–20 | Sat. 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sun. 11 a.m.–5 p.m.**
**Downtown Durham**
Durham's signature fine arts festival with juried artists, live performers, kids' activities, and food vendors.
**durhamarts.org/centerfest**

### LA FIESTA DEL PUEBLO
**September 20 | Time TBA**
**City Plaza, Raleigh**
A Hispanic cultural festival on Fayetteville Street with music, art, dance, children's activities, and food from different regions of Latin America.
**elpueblo.org**

### RALEIGH WIDE OPEN MUSIC FESTIVAL
**October 1–3 | Times TBA**
Fayetteville Street and various downtown Raleigh venues
A free downtown music festival focused on bluegrass, Americana, folk, and traditional music.
**pinecone.org**

### TRIANGLE OKTOBERFEST
**October 2–3 | Times TBA**
**Koka Booth Amphitheatre, Cary**
One of the area's biggest Oktoberfest celebrations, with German beer, Bavarian food, music, stein-hoisting, and wiener dog races.
**triangleoktoberfest.org**

### FALLING FOR LOCAL
**October 3 | 11 a.m.–6 p.m.**
**Dix Park, Raleigh**
A free fall festival with local makers, craft beer, food trucks, live music, kids' games, hayrides, and pumpkins.
**shoplocalraleigh.org**

### GOOD MOON FESTIVAL
**October 8–10 | Times vary by show**
**DPAC, Durham**
A three-day Durham music festival featuring Sylvan Esso, Tyler Childers, Meshell Ndegeocello, Silvana Estrada, and aja monet.
**dpacnc.com**

### CAROLINA BALLET: DRACULA
**October 15–November 1 | Select performances, including October 31 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.**
**Fletcher Opera Theater, Raleigh**
A gothic Carolina Ballet world premiere just in time for spooky season.
**martinmariettacenter.com**

### WAKE FOREST AUTUMN ART & PLANT FESTIVAL
**October 17 | 10 a.m.–4 p.m.**
**Wake Forest Historical Museum, Wake Forest**
A seasonal art, music, and plant festival with vendors, shopping, food, and fall fun.
**wfgardenclub.org**

### HALLOWEEN BOO BASH
**October 17 | All day**
**Downtown Wake Forest**
A free, family-oriented Halloween festival for kids 12 and under, with inflatables, food trucks, games, activities, and costumes.
**wakeforestnc.gov**

### ZOMBIEPALOOZA
**October 23 | 6–9 p.m.**
**Downtown Cary Park's Great Lawn, Cary**
A free all-ages zombie short film competition with themed activities and costume contests.
**thecarytheater.com/zombiepalooza**

### NC STATE FOOTBALL VS. CALIFORNIA
**October 31 | Time TBA**
**Carter-Finley Stadium, Raleigh**
Wolfpack homecoming meets Halloween for a fall football matchup that's sure to be a Raleigh favorite.
**gopack.com**




# Inspired by the land.
# Designed for life.

GREENFIELD COMMUNITIES

## 2026 Developer of the Year

**HBA Raleigh-Wake County**

© 2026 Greenfield Communities. All rights reserved. Photos are representational. Community features subject to change.







# Serenity

## A fresh take on country living in Fuquay-Varina

Named 2024 & 2025 NC Community of the Year, Serenity offers award-winning amenities, beautiful new homes, and authentic community living in a relaxed, farm-inspired setting.

SerenityLifeNC.com

# CAPETON

## Riverfront living where the Cape Fear meets Lillington

Set along nearly two miles of the Cape Fear River, Capeton brings new homes, commercial villages, riverfront amenities and distinctive Lowcountry-inspired design to a stunning natural setting.

CapetonNC.com







**DISCOVER OUR TWO SIGNATURE MASTER-PLANNED COMMUNITIES**

Every great community begins with a simple idea: create a place people never want to leave. At Greenfield Communities, our master planned communities are designed to inspire everyday joy, from peaceful morning walks and afternoons at the pool to evenings shared with neighbors and family. It's a thoughtful approach to community design that creates places people are proud to call home.

GreenfieldCommunities.com

George Smart's Durham living room embodies the timeless simplicity he's spent decades preserving.



DEPARTMENT **KALEIDOSCOPE**

# THE HOUSES THAT LOOKED LIKE THE FUTURE

## George Smart, the fight to preserve North Carolina modernist homes, and why losing them still stings

STORY BY DATHAN KAZSUK | PHOTOS BY JESSICA BRATTON

I'll admit it: Before I sat down with George Smart at his Durham home, I didn't know much about modernist houses.

I knew the look, at least in the loose way most people do. Flat roofs. Big glass. Sharp lines. The kind of house you drive past and think someone with better taste than the rest of us must live there. But the deeper story behind them—why they matter, why North Carolina has so many of them, and why people like Smart have spent years trying to keep them from disappearing—was still a mystery to me.

That changed quickly.

We sat in his backyard on the kind of afternoon that feels staged for a good interview. A slight breeze moved through the trees, and the lake just beyond the patio—maybe 30 yards out—gave the setting the kind of calm that made it easy to stay awhile. As I told Smart, I wasn't an architecture expert. I was a storyteller. And the more we talked, the more I realized this was never just a story about houses. It was a story about memory, preservation, and what a place loses when people stop paying attention.

Smart is the founder and CEO of USModernist, the world's largest nonprofit educational archive dedicated to documenting, preserving, and promoting modernist residential design. Over the years, he's become one of the country's most recognizable advocates for these




homes, helping build an archive that includes thousands of houses and millions of pages of architecture magazines, while also turning his passion into tours, talks, and events that bring people directly inside the work.

So what exactly makes a house modernist?

"Modernism was a response in the early part of the 20th century to a desire to improve the way people live," he tells me.

Before modernism, homes were largely broken into smaller rooms. You heated one room at a time. You needed windows positioned for ventilation, because central air and heat were not yet the norm. Building materials had their limits.

But then design began to evolve with steel, glass, and new ways of thinking about space. Houses opened up. Light became part of the design. Rooms began to flow into one another instead of being boxed off from daily life. "One great legacy of modernism that has affected everybody is the open floor plan," Smart says.

People may think of modernist homes as something rare or niche, but one of their biggest ideas became standard American living. The wide-open living room, dining room, and kitchen setup that now feels mandatory in new construction owes plenty to the modernist mindset.

Smart points out three other defining traits beyond that open flow. First, you usually have a flat or low-pitched roof. Second, there are abundant light sources—big windows, skylights, courtyards, or atriums—all intended to connect the indoors to nature. Third, the geometry tends to break away from the simple box. Put all those elements together, he says, and very few homes in America qualify as modernist.

It also explains why these homes tend to stick in people's minds. Some become so distinctive they get nicknames. In Florida, there is the Jetsons House. In Raleigh, the late Eduardo Catalano's famous home, known as the Potato Chip House, was noted for its dramatic swooping roof. The USModernist archive notes that the Catalano House was also known as the Raleigh House and became one of the best-known examples of North Carolina modernism before it was demolished in 2001.

## THE HOUSE THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Smart didn't grow up dreaming of floor plans and drafting tables. He actually disliked architecture when he was younger, especially after spending summers in his father's Raleigh office duplicating blueprints on an old machine and inhaling ammonia fumes. He went into management consulting instead. Then, years after his father died, something changed.

That turning point came in 2007, late at night, while he was thinking about building a house of his own. During his online search, he came across the

Catalano House. “When I found this house, it was like, you know, this is an amazing house,” he says. “And I learned it was gone. It had been torn down in 2001 … How could people let this happen?”

For Smart, that discovery wasn’t just architectural curiosity. It became personal. He was a Raleigh native. His father had been an architect. And somehow one of the most striking houses ever built in the city had come and gone without him fully understanding what had been lost. Later, he realized he had actually been to the house as a child, which made it hit even harder.

That late-night rabbit hole became a list of Raleigh homes. The list became a website. The website became NCModernist, then USModernist. Today, Smart’s own speaker bio calls him “The Accidental Archivist,” which feels about right for a man who stumbled into this world and then helped build one of its most important archives.

His work matters—especially in North Carolina—because, as Smart puts it, the state has one of the largest concentrations of modernist houses in the country. He credits much of that to Henry Kamphoefner, the influential dean recruited to NC State in 1948 to reshape its architecture program. Under Kamphoefner, the school became a magnet for major modernist talent and ideas, helping spread that design language across Raleigh, Durham, Charlotte, Asheville, Wilmington, and smaller towns that don’t usually come up in casual architecture conversations.

## A RACE AGAINST TIME

For all the beauty and idealism wrapped up in these houses, Smart is refreshingly blunt when the conversation turns to preservation. “Preservation is really about keeping some of the great houses from the ’50s from being destroyed,” he says.

He also makes something very clear: Owners of important homes often get bad information. They’re told that putting a house on the National Register of Historic Places will protect it. It won’t. They’re told that a local or state historic designation will automatically save it. Also not true. They’re told that if a house was designed by a famous architect, that fact alone will stop someone from tearing it down. Again, no. Those assumptions may sound comforting, but Smart says they don’t legally solve the problem. According to him, there are really only two practical ways to protect a house.

The first is a deed restriction. In simple terms, it’s a document filed with the county register of deeds stating that whoever buys the property cannot tear it down for a set period—say, 10 years. It’s not glamorous, but Smart says it’s effective because it becomes a condition of the sale. Anyone interested in buying the house has to know up front that demolition is off the table for that period. In Smart’s view, that alone weeds out developers and buyers who promise to keep the home standing while secretly planning otherwise.

The second option is a preservation easement, which typically requires a trustee and spells out specific things future owners can and cannot do to the property. Smart says this is especially useful for houses with unusually important interior features or highly significant historical details. The point isn’t to freeze a house in amber. Bathrooms and kitchens change. Technology changes. Families change. But a preservation easement can help ensure additions and updates respect the original design, instead of turning a significant modernist home into a patchwork of competing styles.

Just as important, Smart points out what doesn’t work. “If you wait until the house is sold, and a demolition permit has been pulled, and the bulldozers

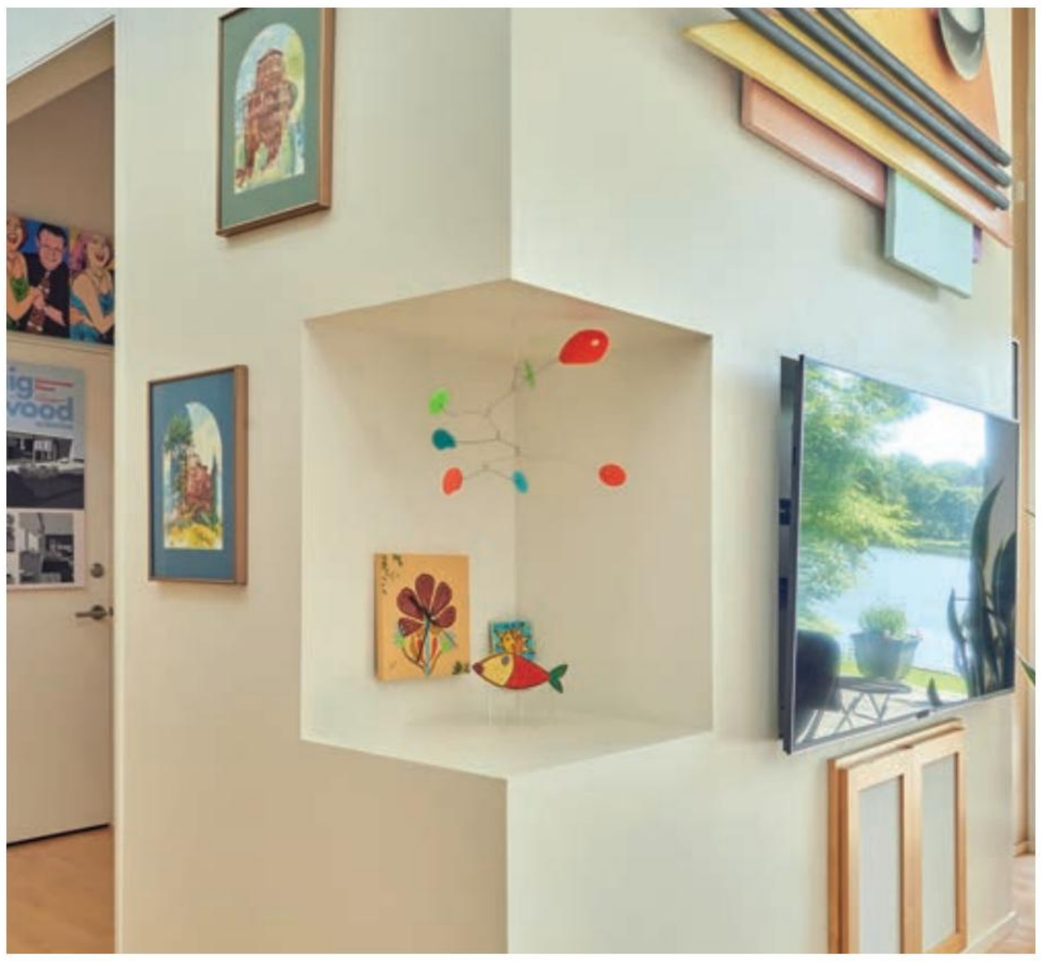
OPPOSITE PAGE: George Smart, founder and CEO of NCModernist, has spent decades documenting and advocating for modernist residential design.

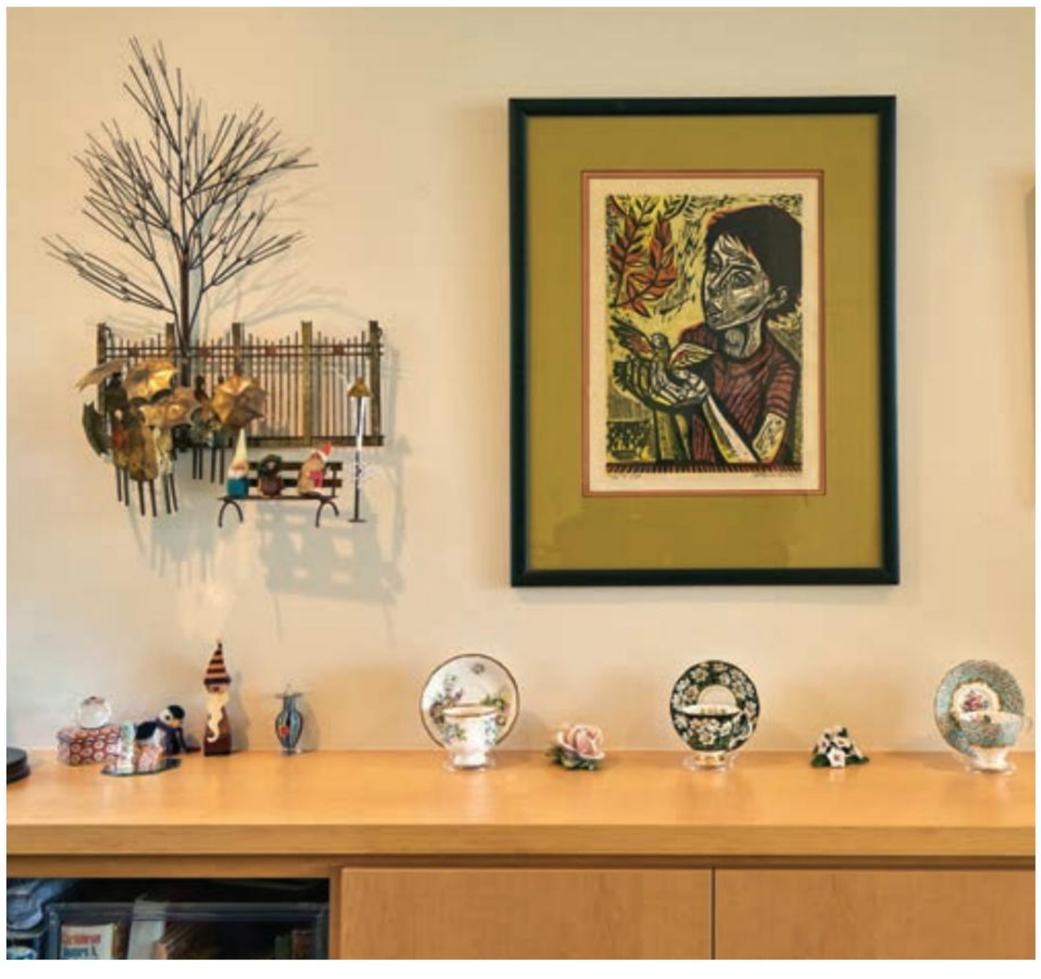
BELOW: Smart’s home reflects modernism’s emphasis on horizontal lines, asymmetrical forms, and a low-slung profile. At the rear, broad expanses of glass, a spacious deck and a slatted pergola extend the living areas outdoors, creating a seamless connection between the home and its natural surroundings.











[are] coming down the street, these 11th-hour rescues never work," he says.

That may be the most sobering thing he says all afternoon. By the time the panic hits, the real opportunity has usually passed. Smart believes intervention has to happen earlier—when a longtime owner dies, when heirs are deciding what to do, when a house first becomes vacant, when there's still time to put real protections in place before land value wins.

## LOST LANDMARKS

Smart mentions the Zimmerman House, a 1950 Craig Ellwood–designed modernist home in Brentwood, California, that was demolished by Chris Pratt and Katherine Schwarzenegger to make way for a new mansion. The demolition drew widespread criticism from preservationists and architecture fans, becoming a public reminder that even architecturally important homes can disappear when someone values the lot more than the legacy.

And it's not the only example.

On Long Island, Marcel Breuer's Geller House I—one of the architect's best-known residential works—was demolished in January 2022. Reports say the site was cleared to make way for a larger home and a tennis court, which is the kind of detail that sounds too cynical to be true until you realize it is.

Another case came in Beverly Hills with John Lautner's 1951 Shusett House. Preservationists fought to save it, but the owner wanted it demolished to build a new residence. The house was ultimately lost, and later, the Los Angeles Times noted that Beverly Hills' preservation ordinance was written in response to demolitions, including the Shusett House. Sometimes, it seems, a place only becomes important once it's gone.

For Smart, losses like the Zimmerman House reinforce the same point he's been making for years in North Carolina: Once a significant modernist house is torn down, the conversation shifts from preservation to regret. The archive can preserve the memory. The photographs can preserve the lines. But the house itself is gone for good.

## OPENING THE DOORS

If the archive is one side of Smart's mission, Modapalooza may be the most public-facing proof that

Smart's kitchen puts modernist principles into practice through an open layout, clean horizontal lines and use of wood, steel and glass. Flat-panel cabinetry keeps visual clutter to a minimum, while high ceilings, exposed structure and abundant natural light give the room an airy connection to the rest of the home.

Natural light pours through expansive glass and clerestory windows, illuminating an open geometric volumes and cube-like niches. Against the home's restrained palette of wood, white walls and exposed steel, colorful art, furnishings, and sculptural objects add warmth and personality without disrupting the modernist lines.

people will care about modernist homes once they have the chance to experience them.

NCModernist's Modapalooza tours have become a signature event, taking roughly 150 architecture fans by bus through private modernist homes across North Carolina. Marketed as a way to experience both new and classic houses without the hassle of navigating yourself, the tours continue each spring and fall. Smart has been leading them for more than a decade.

That popularity makes sense. Looking at a house from the street is one thing. Walking inside it is another. That's where people begin to understand how the light works, how the spaces connect, how the house frames the outdoors, and how the details reveal themselves in a way a quick drive-by never could.

By the time I left Smart's house, I understood something I hadn't grasped at the start of our conversation. Modernist homes aren't just visually striking leftovers from another era. They're part of a bigger North Carolina story—one tied to innovation, design ambition, and the willingness to imagine living differently.

George Smart may have found that story through a rabbit hole in the middle of the night. The rest of us are lucky he kept following it. 5W

Modernism's open floor plans and expansive walls of glass invite natural light into the living space while visually extending the room beyond its walls. In Smart's home, the floor-to-ceiling panels also frame a sweeping view of the lake and its natural setting.





# GATHER AROUND:
## Stellar Aims to be Five Points' Living Room

STORY BY DATHAN KAZSUK | PHOTOS COURTESY OF STELLAR

In an era where new restaurants seem to pop up every month, it takes more than a polished dining room or a fancy menu to stand out. For the team behind Stellar in Raleigh's Five Points neighborhood, the goal has never been to become the hottest reservation in town. Instead, owners Mandy Tamplin and Daniel Willis set out to create something far more personal: a neighborhood gathering place where great food, thoughtful wine, and genuine hospitality keep guests coming back.

Just over a year after opening, that vision is beginning to take shape.

"The neighborhood people have really embraced us," Willis says. "We have a lot of regulars, everybody seems to love the menu, and we're still getting the word out. A lot of people still don't realize we're here."

Tucked inside High Park Village, Stellar benefits from its location in an established neighborhood while remaining something of a hidden gem. But that won't last forever. A new residential development planned directly across the street is expected to bring hundreds of new residents within walking distance, creating even more opportunities for the restaurant to become part of the community's daily rhythm.

For Tamplin, hospitality has always been second nature. A longtime wine professional who spent years representing distributors throughout Raleigh, Charleston, and Washington, D.C., she later opened a successful wine bar in Portsmouth, Virginia, before returning to Raleigh three years ago. Willis arrived via a different path, leaving more than two decades in IT sales to pursue a business where he could build something of his own.

The pair, who are planning an October wedding, now spend nearly every evening working side by side inside Stellar.

"We're very hospitality-driven," Tamplin says. "We're not just selling food. We're selling an experience and a vibe."

Vinyl records line the restaurant, customers are encouraged to bring albums to play, and live music fills

the room on weekends. While the owners have personal tastes ranging from jazz to hip-hop, the soundtrack changes with the crowd, creating an easygoing environment that feels more like a friend's living room than a traditional restaurant.

The menu follows the same philosophy. Rather than overwhelming diners with pages of options, Stellar focuses on a concise selection of elevated American comfort food, allowing the kitchen to concentrate on quality while rotating dishes seasonally.

“We're not going to do too much,” Willis says. “We're trying to keep it simple, classy, affordable, and fun.”

Signature dishes include smoked chicken, filet mignon, tuna tataki, sliders, and other approachable favorites that pair naturally with Tamplin's carefully curated wine program. Drawing on decades in the wine industry, she works closely with neighboring Seaboard Wine to develop a list that offers value alongside variety, with a particular appreciation for Spanish wines.

Guests can also take advantage of weekly specials, including half-price bottles of wine on Tuesdays, discounted draft beers on Wednesdays, and buy-one-get-one half-price appetizers on Thursdays.

The owners' hands-on approach extends well beyond the kitchen and bar. They're typically on-site every evening, greeting guests, bartending, serving food, and building relationships that have quickly translated into loyal regulars.

One evening, just as the kitchen had been cleaned and was preparing to close, a woman arrived looking for dinner. Instead of turning her away, the staff reopened the kitchen and served her a meal.

“It would've been easy to tell her no,” Tamplin recalls.

Weeks later, that same guest returned to celebrate her birthday—with 17 of her best friends.

For Willis, it's a reminder that small acts of hospitality often create lasting relationships.

“Something's going to happen every day that you can't predict,“ he says. “Every challenge teaches you something, and you just keep improving.”

Looking ahead, Stellar plans to expand private dining, wine dinners, catering, and community events while continuing to serve as a neighborhood destination. As nearby residential growth reshapes Five Points, the owners believe their biggest opportunity isn't to become larger—it’s to become more deeply connected to the people around them.

“I’m just happy to be back in Raleigh,” Tamplin says. “This is such a supportive community. Our customers genuinely want to see us succeed, and that's incredibly comforting.” Ⓜ








DEPARTMENT **STYLE**

# RETHINKING RETAIL

## In an era of fast fashion and one-click purchases, Cheyenne Levinson is making the case for sustainability and secondhand shopping

STORY BY TAYLOR BOWLER | PHOTOS ALONZA MITCHELL

Cheyenne Levinson discovered thrift store shopping as a teenager growing up in Fort Myers, Florida. Her older brother introduced her to the thrill of the hunt, and she was instantly hooked.

"Our mom was a single mother and she hated shopping, so we had to figure out our own clothing situation " Levinson says. "A friend lived near a thrift store we could walk to, and we'd find the c olest, funkiest things. I was using my own babysitting money, so I had to be thrifty. I remember this funny family reunion potato sweatshirt—I thought it was the most fun thing."

That early appreciation for secondhand treasures became the foundation of a thriving business.

Today, Levinson is the owner of Little Oak Collective, a children's clothing consignment boutique with locations in Raleigh's Five Points and Wake Forest. A third location is slated to open in Cary later this year. In May, she expanded with State of Thrift, a curated secondhand fashion boutique for teens through adults located in the same historic Five Points building as the flagship Little ak Collective.

Since opening her first store in 2023, Levinson has built loyal following around thoughtfully curated children's clothing, toys, books, and gear. The shop has become a destination for Triangle families seeking an elevated consignment experience—one rooted as much in community as commerce.

But the roots of Little Oak Collective stretch back much further. Levinson attended Appalachian State University and studied abroad in New Zealand, where she became pregnant with her now 12-year-old son. Long before she built a business around resale, the young mom was shopping secondhand out of both necessity and conviction.

When her family, which now includes her 6-year-old daughter, moved to Raleigh in 2016, she was surprised by what she didn't find.

"I was shocked that there wasn't an independent children's consignment store," Levinson says. "Even in Boone, at App State, we had one. That was the gap."

On the heels of Little Oak Collective's third anniversary, Levinson launched State of Thrift—but the concept quickly evolved.

"When space next to us became available, I thought, What if we do this for teens and tweens?," she says.

Almost immediately, Levinson noticed something unexpected.

"It was all moms from Little Oak shopping at State of Thrift," she says. "Within the first week, we transitioned to an adult consignment store. The synergy has been incredible."

Customers can drop off items and shop both stores in a single visit, using store credit interchangeably. State of Thrift carries fashion for all genders and inclusive sizes, including an extensive men's selection.

While affordability is a major draw, Levinson believes secondhand shopping carries a broader significance. The fashion industry is one of the world's largest polluters, and fast fashion contributes to textile waste, overconsumption, and environmental strain.

In an era of fast fashion and one-click purchases, Levinson sees a growing shift in consumer behavior. More shoppers are seeking out secondhand options, not just because they're sustainable, but because the shopping experience is genuinely fun.

"There aren't many places in the Triangle where you can get a graphic T-shirt and a nice designer dress," she says. "Our stores are so well-curated, so people still get that instant gratification…and we can compete with fast fashion. Customers will ask, 'Do you ship?' We don't. Inventory moves way too fast."

More than anything, Levinson wants her stores to feel welcoming and inclusive.

"I think it makes people feel connected to the community and where they live," she says. "We're literally trading clothes with each other, and I think that is so cool." SW








# When a Marriage Ends, Who Protects the Legacy?

## How Gantt Family Law combines financial acumen and courtroom strategy to protect what matters most.

When a successful couple chooses to go separate ways, a family business, investments, real estate, executive pay, and long-term savings may all be at risk. Choosing the right legal team can make a lasting difference.

Gantt Family Law represents business owners, executives, professionals, and their spouses across Central North Carolina, pairing family law expertise with a strong understanding of business and finance.

**More Than 25 Years of Experience**

Founder **Richard Bruce Gantt** is a North Carolina Board Certified Family Law Specialist and Certified Valuation Analyst. Before practicing family law, he worked in investment banking, helping business owners find funding and buyers.

That experience helps Richard examine business valuations, cash flow, tax issues, and financial reports. He knows how to question the numbers and find overlooked details. With many years of trial experience, he is ready for court when needed.

Richard has been recognized by *Super Lawyers* and the *Business North Carolina* "Legal Elite" Hall of Fame. He also trains fellow attorneys in business valuation, property division, taxes, and trial strategy. Having navigated divorce and single fatherhood himself, he understands that every financial decision has a lasting impact on a family.

**A Former Judge's Point of View**

**Anna Worley** brings more than 28 years of experience, including 16 years as a North Carolina District Court Judge. A Board Certified Family Law Specialist and Certified Family Financial Mediator, Anna helps clients understand how a judge may view their case while looking for practical solutions.

**Calm, Honest Guidance**

**Max Rodden**, also a Board-Certified Family Law Specialist, brings decades of experience and a steady approach, offering honest advice to help clients make decisions that support their long-term goals.

Together, Richard, Anna, and Max offer financial knowledge, courtroom insight, and personal support. Their goal is not simply to finish a divorce—it is to help clients protect what they have built and move forward with confidence.

Call us at 919.809.8860
ganttfamilylaw.com

*The information on this page is provided to the public by the advertiser mentioned above.*



# LEADERS *in* MODERN MEDICINE

The Triangle has become one of the nation's leading hubs for healthcare, medical research, and life sciences, home to an extraordinary range of physicians, specialists, and healthcare innovators. In the following pages, you'll meet a collection of practices that are shaping the region's reputation for exceptional care. From primary care physicians and surgeons to dentists, veterinarians, and specialty providers, Leaders in Modern Medicine highlights professionals serving patients across every stage of life. Whether you're exploring new healthcare options or simply getting to know some of the practices that are making a difference in our community, this special section offers a closer look at the people behind modern medicine in the Triangle.

PHOTO BY STOCK.ADOBE.COM–ROGERPHOTO




# CAROLINA NONSURGICAL ORTHOPEDICS

Dr. Matthew Kanaan and Dr. Pierce Knox

For patients seeking to avoid or delay surgery, Carolina Nonsurgical Orthopedics provides evidence-based, non-surgical regenerative orthopedic medicine, advanced ultrasound-guided procedures, and personalized treatment plans. Rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach to pain relief, Dr Matthew Kanaan and Dr. Pierce Knox tailor recommendations to the patient's unique condition, goals, and lifestyle.

Since 2013, the clinic has performed more than 50,000 procedures, giving patients access to advanced, non-surgical treatments such as High-Dose Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP), SuperPRP, Microfragmented Adipose Tissue (MFAT) therapy, Shockwave Therapy, MLS Laser, and other regenerative orthopedic procedures. Designed to treat arthritis—including bone-on-bone cases—chronic joint and tendon pain, sports injuries, and post-surgical discomfort, these therapies harness the body's own healing cells to reduce inflammation and promote recovery

Carolina Nonsurgical Orthopedics' mission is to help patients stay active, independent, and healthy for as long as possible. Whether that means avoiding or prolonging surgery, reducing reliance on steroid injections or pain medications, or getting back to the activities they enjoy, success is measured by restoring quality of life.

Now with clinics in Raleigh and Cary, as well as online self-scheduling, patients have even quicker access to appointments. Most major insurances accepted.

CAROLINA NONSURGICAL ORTHOPEDICS
ARTHRITIS | PRP & STEM CELLS | SPORTS MEDICINE

7200 Creedmoor Road, Suite 102
Raleigh, NC 27613
1010 High House Road, Suite 102
Cary, NC 27513
919.719.2270
carolinanonsurgicalortho.com

# THE PRP CENTER: NONSURGICAL HAIR RESTORATION

Maggie McLaughlin, PA-C




As regenerative medicine continues to reshape modern healthcare, The PRP Center has become a trusted clinic for leading-edge, nonsurgical hair restoration in the Triangle. The practice is dedicated exclusively to advanced, evidence-based treatments for hair thinning and hair loss in both women and men, and is considered a leader in high-dose Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) treatments.

Led by Maggie McLaughlin, PA-C, The PRP Center combines clinical expertise with evidence-based regenerative medicine to create personalized treatment plans tailored to each patient's needs and goals. By specializing in high-quality PRP therapy and other minimally invasive treatment options (such as Alma TED), the practice focuses on stimulating the body's natural healing processes to promote healthier, fuller hair, whether a patient is in the earliest phases of hair thinning or experiencing age-related male and female pattern hair loss.

What sets The PRP Center apart is its personalized approach. Every treatment plan begins with a comprehensive consultation and is tailored to each patient's condition, goals, and response to care.

Committed to exceptional outcomes and compassionate care, The PRP Center is redefining what is possible in nonsurgical hair restoration by not only restoring patients' hair, but also their confidence.

THE PRP CENTER
NONSURGICAL HAIR RESTORATION

7200 Creedmoor Road, Suite 102
Raleigh, NC 27613
1010 High House Road, Suite 102
Cary, NC 27513
919.526.0015
prpcenters.com



# BOVENIZER & BAKER ORTHODONTICS

Drs. Christopher Baker, Tonya Spangler, and Todd Bovenizer

At Bovenizer & Baker Orthodontics, exceptional care starts with knowing the person behind the smile. Treatment is a partnership: the team listens to each patient's goals, explains options clearly, welcomes questions, and builds genuine relationships from the first consultation through the final reveal. With a warm atmosphere and thoughtful details, the office feels less clinical and more like a second home—where patients feel comfortable, confident, and cared for every step of the way.

To them, modern orthodontics means pairing proven clinical expertise with technology that makes care more precise, comfortable, and personalized. Digital scanning, advanced imaging, treatment planning, and 3D printing allow them to create appliances and retainers with greater accuracy, often reducing chair time while helping patients visualize their results. But technology is only part of the equation. Their doctors also bring an artistic eye to every smile, considering tooth shape, gumline, proportions, and the overall smile arc. When appropriate, finishing touches such as tooth shaping or gum contouring can take a result from simply straight to beautifully balanced.

The most rewarding part of bringing contemporary orthodontic care to their community is seeing the confidence that grows alongside each patient's smile. A child who once hid their teeth begins smiling freely. An adult who postponed treatment for years finally chooses to invest in themselves. Families feel supported, informed, and excited about the transformation taking place.

Bovenizer & Baker Orthodontics hopes its impact extends beyond the smiles created in its office. The team is committed to raising the standard of orthodontic care, mentoring fellow professionals, supporting local schools and organizations, and treating every patient with kindness and intention. Ultimately, they want to help people feel healthier, more confident, and more connected to their community.

2625 High House Road
Cary, NC 27519
919.303.4557
bovbakerortho.com



# CARY DERMATOLOGY CENTER

Since 1980, Cary Dermatology has been one of the longest established and most experienced dermatology practices in Wake County, dedicated to serving the community. Cary Aesthetic Center was established 26 years ago to help meet the growing aesthetic needs of their patients.

Maintaining its independence as a doctor-owned practice is central to its mission of patient-centered care. This structure enables them to schedule adequate time to address the needs of their patients during every visit.

Modern Medicine means delivering thoughtful, evidence-based care while staying at the forefront of rapidly-evolving treatments. The practice brings the latest advancements to the community, including innovative treatments for chronic conditions such as psoriasis and eczema. The most rewarding part is helping their patients understand, manage, and improve their health. That commitment has been at the heart of their mission since day one.

Looking back on 46 years in medicine, they hope their lasting impact is a community that feels genuinely cared for—patients who know their concerns will always be heard, and whose health and well-being are always the priority. Medicine will keep changing, but they hope the standard they set of compassionate, thorough, patient-first dermatologic care is one that continues, at Cary Dermatology and beyond, for generations of patients to come.

CARY DERMATOLOGY CENTER
& CARY AESTHETIC CENTER

101 SW Cary Parkway, Suite 210
Cary, NC 27511
919.467.8556
carydermatology.com

Cary Dermatology Center (L to R): Tarsha Rivens, PA-C; Madison Gerace, LME, MBA; Catherine Smith, PA-C; Anna Pierce, LME; Jacob Subash, MD, MBA, FAAD; Alexander Chiaramonti, MD, FAAD; Catherine Hren, MD, FAAD; Heidi Mangelsdorf, MD, FAAD; Sally McNamee, RN; Madalyn Ferlazzo, PA-C; Kristine Water, PA-C



## CORNERSTONE PEDIATRIC & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE

Drs. Kristin Donoghue; Kelly Carney, Chitra Chandrasekaran, Matthew Baldwin, Theresa Kallman, Priti Elkins-Williams, Jeff Rutledge – *Not pictured: Drs. Brett Wilson, Shefali Parmar, Vandana Nayal, and Richard Gelber*

Cornerstone Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine has been caring for children and families in Cary and the surrounding community since 1995. From a baby's first days through the transition into young adulthood, their goal is to provide trusted, compassionate care while building lasting relationships with the families they serve.

The Cornerstone team includes 11 board-certified pediatric physicians with more than 240 years of combined experience. They are proud to be recognized as a Level III Patient-Centered Medical Home, the highest level of recognition awarded by the National Committee for Quality Assurance. Their physicians follow the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics and are committed to providing personalized, evidence-based care for every child.

At Cornerstone, they understand that children don't always get sick at convenient times and busy families need healthcare that fits their schedules. That's why they offer access to care seven days a week, including same-day sick visits, weekend appointments, weekday walk-in sick care, after-hours appointments and 24/7 nurse advice and physician on-call support. Families can also schedule many appointments online at their convenience. Their comprehensive services extend well beyond routine well visits and sick care. Cornerstone offers immunizations, an on-site laboratory, allergy and asthma care, ADHD management, nutrition and weight management, travel consultations, newborn circumcisions, and lactation support.

Cornerstone believes exceptional pediatric care is built on partnership. Parents know their children best, and the care team values their questions, concerns, and input as they work together to support each child's health, development, and well-being.

Whether you're expecting your first baby, new to the area, or searching for a pediatric practice to grow alongside your family, Cornerstone Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine would be honored to welcome you and be part of your family's journey.

CORNERSTONE
PEDIATRIC & ADOLESCENT MEDICINE

97 Cornerstone Drive
Cary, NC 27519
919.460.0993
cornerstonepediatrics.org




# LANE & ASSOCIATES FAMILY DENTISTRY

Dr. Don G. Lane, DDS

At Lane & Associates Family Dentistry, they're not just keeping up with modern dentistry—they're leading it!

For more than 45 years, they've combined experience, innovation, and advanced technology to deliver smarter, more precise, and more personalized care. From digital imaging and AI-assisted treatment planning, they're constantly looking for new ways to make dentistry better.

"Because modern medicine isn't just about having the latest technology. It's about using it to transform the patient experience," says Dr. Don Lane, chairman and owner of Lane & Associates Family Dentistry.

As the official Team Dentists of the Carolina Hurricanes and the Durham Bulls, Lane & Associates knows what it takes to perform at the highest level. That same commitment to precision, innovation, and excellence is brought to every patient who walks through their doors.

Whether you're looking for a healthier smile, a complete transformation, or simply a better dental experience, their team is equipped with the tools and expertise to make it happen:

- 45+ years of experience
- 50+ convenient locations
- Next-generation technology
- One exceptional standard of care

They're investing in the future of dentistry today so you can experience what's possible tomorrow. This isn't the future of dental care—it's dental care reimagined.

At Lane & Associates Family Dentistry, they love to make you smile!

For more information, visit lanedds.com or call 1-877-LANE-DDS (526-3337).

# TRIANGLE WELLNESS & RECOVERY PLLC

Dr. Sara Koenig, founder and medical director



Ask most people what recovery looks like, and you'll hear a list of things that stop. The drinking. The panic. The crises. That part is real and hard-won. But people who reach it often describe the same surprise: quitting wasn't the hardest part. Figuring out what comes next is.

Founded by Dr. Sara Koenig, Triangle Wellness & Recovery was built around that gap. The Triangle Recovery Model™, developed here, organizes care into three phases, with the person—not the diagnosis—at the center.

**Stabilize.** Nothing else works until sleep, safety, and steadiness return. Psychiatric evaluation, careful medication management, and medical care where it helps. Needing that support is not a failure of willpower. It is the floor everything else is built on.

**Understand.** Here we look at what's underneath—the patterns, the losses, the burdens that were never theirs to carry. Every therapist on Dr. Koenig's team holds advanced trauma training, and they offer trauma-specific therapies such as EMDR, along with creative and somatic approaches, for the work that talk alone does not always reach. The practice also offers ketamine treatment and Ketamine-Assisted Psychotherapy. This phase moves at the patient's pace, not the therapist's.

**Create.** The phase most programs never reach. Relationships, work, purpose, a clearer sense of who you are becoming. Recovery is not only the absence of what hurt you. It's the presence of a life that reflects your values and brings you meaning and happiness.

Triangle Wellness & Recovery's Dual Diagnosis Intensive Outpatient Program puts the model into daily practice for people managing a mental health condition, an addiction, or both. Morning and afternoon groups and in-network coverage through most major plans make intensive treatment possible without stepping away from work or family.

The team is physician-led and trauma-informed at every level, LGBTQIA+ affirming and neurodivergent friendly. What holds it together isn't a protocol. It's a conviction that everyone arrives with a story worth honoring and a future worth building.

Recovery isn't about going back to who you were. It's about moving toward who you actually want to be—and you do not have to work that out alone.

TRIANGLE
WELLNESS & RECOVERY

1000 Darrington Drive, Suite 204
Cary, North Carolina 27513
919.338.5620
twrnc.com

ALONZA MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPHY









ALONZAMITCHELL.COM



SIP& SAVOR

Found exclusively inside

MIDTOWN 5 WEST



Dive into the vibrant world of libations and culinary delights with Sip & Savor, your go-to section for stories from around the Triangle and across North Carolina. Every *Midtown* and *5 West* issue will explore the rich tapestry of wine, beer, spirits and food highlighting trending flavors and must-visit spots.



MORRISVILLE Chamber of COMMERCE
HEART OF THE TRIANGLE

**JOIN TODAY!**

*Connect, Grow, and Thrive Together*

**Maximize your potential through community and collaboration.**

**MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:**

- Life Sciences Networking Events
- Community Engagement
- Training Workshops
- Marketing Opportunities

***morrisvillechamber.org***

# WELL SUITED

## Dressed up, dialed in, and ready for wherever the season leads

Fall style doesn't have to mean choosing between polished and practical. To create these looks, we brought together men's and women's pieces from some of the city's standout local vendors.

The setting was a private residence in Raleigh's Forty Acres neighborhood, a custom home by Speight Built that also appears in our Parade of Homes feature. Its timeless architecture, clean lines, and modern polish provided a fitting backdrop for looks that feel equally refined without being overly precious.

Think elevated workwear, dinner-party dressing, cocktails with friends, networking mixers—or even a Saturday spent touring beautiful homes. Each look is designed to be approachable, versatile, and easy to make your own.

*– Taylor Bowler*

STYLED BY SOFIA LUJAN STYLING

ART DIRECTION BY SEAN BYRNE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JESSICA BRATTON

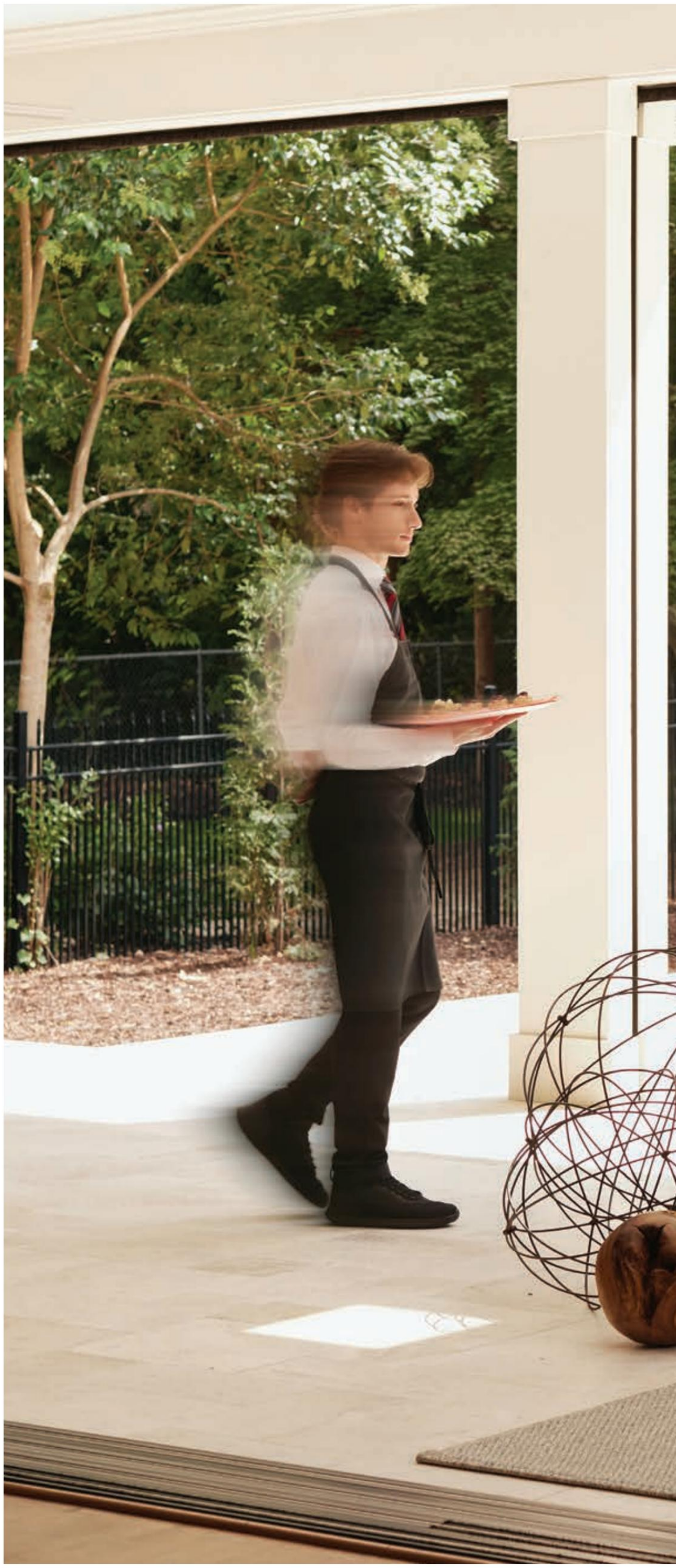
HAIR + MAKEUP BY MICHELLE CLARK

CATERING COURTESY OF
MITCHELL · CASTEEL, A CATERED AFFAIR

WINE COURTESY OF
TRIANGLE AROUND TOWN

HOME COURTESY OF SPEIGHT BUILT

PHOTO SHOOT INTERIOR STYLING BY
JOSEPH WILLIAM INTERIORS















**MARISSA IS WEARING:**

*From Raleigh Denim*

- Resin Rinse Denim Jacket

*From Villa 19 Boutique*

- Selene Sweater Top by Pistola
- Lounge Denim by Splendid LA

*From Rangoni Firenze Shoes*

- Tamigi by Amalfi

*From Kendra Scott*

- Kelly Hoops in Silver
- Bella Chain Necklace in Silver
- Kassie Herringbone Necklace in Silver
- Bella Convertible Statement Necklace in Silver
- Leighton Silver Pearl Band Ring in Freshwater Cultured Pearl
- Andi Band Ring in Silver
- Kelly Bangle Bracelet in Silver
- Alex Two Tone Stainless Steel 28mm Watch in Ivory Mother of Pearl
- Icon Silver Charm Bracelet
- Daphne Convertible Silver Link and Chain Bracelet in Ivory Mother of Pearl
- Elton Silver Cuff Bracelet in Platinum Drusy
- Livy Silver Rings Set of 3 in White Crystal

**SHELTON IS WEARING:**

*From Raleigh Denim*

- Moto jacket in OG Raw Selvage denim
- Graham OG Nihon Selvage jean
- Tab Tee in charcoal

*From Main & Taylor Shoes*

- Cloudnova Rift Men Fog/Ash Sneakers On Running

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Omega Seamaster Planet Ocean
- John Hardy Black Onyx Signet Ring
- John Hardy Lapis Pendant $1,115
- Men's Chain Link Bracelet
- Crown Ring 9mm Sandpaper Finish Men's Band

**LEIGH IS WEARING:**

*From Swagger Boutique*

- Cream Short Sleeve Sweater
- Navy Track Sweatpants by Z Supply

*From Main & Taylor Shoes*

- 4CCCCEES Tura Lex Cream

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Asch Grossbardt Gemstone Necklace, Estate
- 1980s Enamel & Pearl Earrings, Estate
- Victorian Diamond, Pearl & Enamel Portrait Necklace, Estate
- 18.89-Carat Bezel-Set Tennis Bracelet
- 1995 29mm Rolex Lady Datejust Pearlmaster




CHANEL
ALEXANDER McQUEEN: LUXAGE BEAUTY











**LEIGH IS WEARING:**

*From Mode Consignment*

- Abadia Maxi Dress
- Sundays Leather Top

*From Main & Taylor Shoes*

- Chie Mihara Teisin Heeled Loafer in Leopard/ Red
- Caterina Lucchi Handbag in Rich Brown

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Marco Bicego Lunaria Drop Earrings
- Marco Bicego Jaipur Circle Link Necklace
- Marco Bicego Lunaria Twist Station Necklace
- Goldmark Collection Diamond X Ring
- Heritage Collection Croissant Ring
- Club Collection Lauren Ring
- Bezel Set Station Necklace
- 2.21-total Carat Oval Three-stone Engagement Ring
- Infinity Diamond 4-Link Bracelet, Estate
- 1995 29mm Rolex Lady Datejust Pearlmaster

**MARISSA IS WEARING:**

*From Swagger Boutique*

- Olive Sleeveless Mock Neck Sweater
- Olive Polka Dot Pants

*From Rangoni Firenze Shoes*

- Valdis by Valentina Rangoni

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Judith Ripka Emerald, Crystal & Diamond Intaglio on Green Onyx Beads, Estate
- Retro Tourmaline Doorknocker Earrings, Estate
- Retro Triangular-Shaped Side-Link Bracelet, Estate
- Icon Collection Diamond Open Heart Ring
- Icon Collection Belle Ring
- Heritage Collection Gold Dome Ring

---

**Painting courtesy of ArtSource Fine Art**

THIS PAGE: *Pink Peonies in White II*, Christie Younger, oil and graphite on canvas, 36 x 48 in.



















**SHELTON IS WEARING:**

*From Liles Clothing Studio*

- Handmade Stand Collar Chore Jacket in Wool from 100 Hands
- Handmade in Italy Western Shirt in Brown Denim from Sannino Napoli
- Ecru Rinse Selvedge Denim Jeans by Ace Rivington
- Tuscon Belt in Bison, handmade in America by William Kleinberg
- Calgara Boot in hand burnished calf, made in Italy by Scarpe di Bianco

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Black Onyx & White Sapphire Shield Pendant
- John Hardy Pave Spear Bypass Cuff
- 5.5mm Hammered Center/High Polish Men's Band
- 8mm Fluted Band
- 2021 36mm Rolex Oyster Perpetual

**SHELTON IS WEARING:**

*From Bunbury Custom Clothiers*

- Dormeuil Worsted Wool Burgundy Sports Jacket
- Vitale Barberis Canonico Merino Wool Brown Pants
- Bunbury Organic Cotton Blend Tan Polo

*From Main & Taylor Shoes*

- Robert Zur Elton Bit Loafer

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- 2021 36mm Rolex Oyster Perpetual
- Cuban Chain/Link Bracelet
- Diamond Crescent Pin, Estate
- 5.1mm Curb Chain Link Necklace
- 6mm Domed Heavy Comfort Fit High-Polished Men's Band
- Die Struck Signet Ring
- Diamond, & Emerald Signet Ring
- T-Bar Cuff Bracelet

---

**Paintings courtesy of ArtSource Fine Art**

OPPOSITE PAGE: *Botanicals*, Toni Swarthout, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 in.
*Slinky*, by Toni Swarthout, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 36 in.









**LEIGH IS WEARING:**

*From Swagger Boutique*

- Tiger Print Midi Dress

*From Rangoni Firenze Shoes*

- Femmina by Amalfi
- Cromia Handbag

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Glashütte Original Serenade Luna
- Pear-shaped Diamond Hinged Bangle
- 6-carat Five-row Diamond Bracelet
- with Gold Stations, Estate
- Club Collection Embrace Ring
- Icon Collection Diamond Bar Link Ring
- 2.17-total carat weight Emerald-cut Engagement Ring w/ a Hidden Halo
- Pear Bezel-set Diamond Ring
- Pear & Round Diamond Drop Earrings
- 29.61-carat Diamond Tennis Necklace
- 10-carat Pear-cut Bezel-set Tennis Necklace

---

**Painting courtesy of ArtSource Fine Art**

*Evening Blues*, Christie Younger, oil and graphite on canvas, 36 x 24 in.









**MARISSA IS WEARING:**

*From Mode Consignment*

- French Connection Vest
- Blank NYC Leather Skirt

*From Main & Taylor Shoes*

- Chie Mihara Taleah Heeled Loafer in Black
- Olga Berg Gold Clutch

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- 6.82-total carat Diamond Drop Earrings
- Fancy Yellow Diamond Pave Crisscross Ring
- 3.22-carat Emerald-cut Diamond Bangle
- 5.18-carat Diamond Bangle
- Pave Ribbed Ring
- 1.37-carat Flex Bangle
- Beaded & Pave Diamond Flex Bracelet
- Emerald-cut Cuff
- Calla Lily Motif Necklace, Estate


**THANK YOU**

**ArtSource Fine Art**
artsourcefineart.com

**Bailey's Fine Jewelry**
baileybox.com

**Bunbury Custom Clothiers**
bunburysuits.com

**Gentlemen's Corner**
thegcorner.com

**Joseph William Interiors**
josephwilliaminteriors.com

**Kendra Scott**
kendrascott.com

**Main & Taylor Shoes**
mainandtaylorshoes.com

**Michelle Clark, Makeup Artist**
karenmichelleclark.com

**Mitchell • Casteel, A Fine Catered Affair**
mitchellcasteel.com

**Mode Consignment**
modeconsignment.com

**Raleigh Denim**
raleighdenim.com

**Rangoni Firenze**
rangonistore.com

**Swagger Boutique**
shopswaggernow.com

**Triangle Around Town**
trianglearoundtown.com

**Villa 19**
villanineteen.com

**Our models:**
Leigh Adams, Marissa Landis, Shelton Jones II

**Shoot assistants:**
Christie Mandia, Collin Pruitt

Pottery, outdoor lanterns, seasonal greenery, and textiles courtesy of **Pottery Barn, Fenton**
potterybarn.com

Thank you to **Speight Built** for hosting our photo shoot.
speightbuilt.com













**MARISSA IS WEARING:**

*From Villa 19 Boutique*

- Aiden Dress by Amanda Uprichard
- Finn Stripe Sweater by Splendid

*From Rangoni Firenze Shoes*

- Gertrude by Valentina Rangoni
- Bucket Bag by Cuoieria Fiorentina

*From Kendra Scott Jewelry*

- Tiger Striped Daphne Vintage Gold Small Long Pendant Necklace in Chartreuse Green and Mother of Pearl
- Tiger Striped Daphne Vintage Gold Statement Necklace
- Keely Cuff Bracelet 18K Gold Vermeil
- Adela Leather Watch in Brown
- Alani Metal Band Ring in 18K Gold Vermeil
- Tiger Striped Daphne Vintage Gold Cocktail in Chartreuse Green Mother of Pearl
- Raina Charm Bracelet in Vintage Gold
- Tiger Striped Mikki Vintage Gold Cuff Bracelet

**SHELTON IS WEARING:**

*From Gentlemen's Corner*

- Jack Victor "Colbey" Wool/Silk/Linen Shirt-Jacket in Sand
- Johnnie-O "Redwood Check" Sport Shirt in Canyon
- Brax "Hi Flex Light" 5-Pocket Pants in Dark Beige
- W. Kleinberg Suede Belt
- Johnnie-O Boutique Sneakers in Stone

*From Bailey's Fine Jewelry*

- Omega Seamaster Aqua Terra
- Demeglio Groumette Matte Grey Link Stretch Bracelet
- 6mm Domed Heavy Comfort Fit High Polished Men's Band
- 5.1mm Curb Chain Link Necklace
- 8mm Fluted Band

---

**Painting courtesy of ArtSource Fine Art** | *Winter Chill*, Becky Denmark, oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in.

# PARADE of HOMES THE STATE OF HOME

## As the Triangle continues to grow, the Parade of Homes offers a rare look inside the houses, communities, and design ideas defining the future of the region

For home lovers, design enthusiasts, and anyone who loves to peek inside a beautifully built house, the Triangle Parade of Homes is one of the region's most anticipated annual events. What began decades ago as a showcase for local builders has grown into North Carolina's largest open house, drawing thousands of visitors eager to explore the newest homes, communities, technologies, and design ideas shaping the future of Triangle living. The event, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2025, is a testament to the remarkable growth of our region.

From innovative floor plans and energy-efficient features to the finishes, materials, and lifestyle trends influencing today's buyers, the homes on this year's tour reveal how one of America's fastest-growing regions is evolving.

In the pages ahead, we'll talk with the builders behind some of the tour's most compelling homes, explore the history of the Parade itself, and unpack the design trends you'll see this year—and likely for years to come. It's also a chance to appreciate something we sometimes overlook: the incredible talent, creativity, and craftsmanship being produced right here in the Triangle. If the Parade is any indication, our region isn't just growing. It's building a reputation worth noticing.

*— Taylor Bowler*

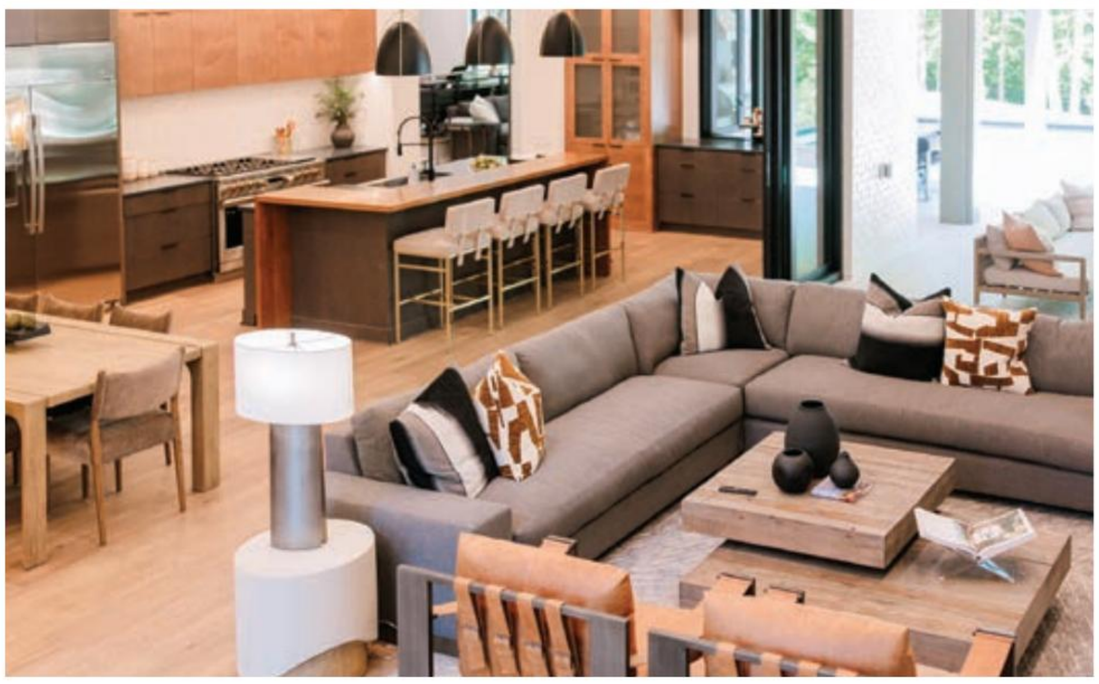
PHOTO BY STOCK.ADOBE.COM–SEB

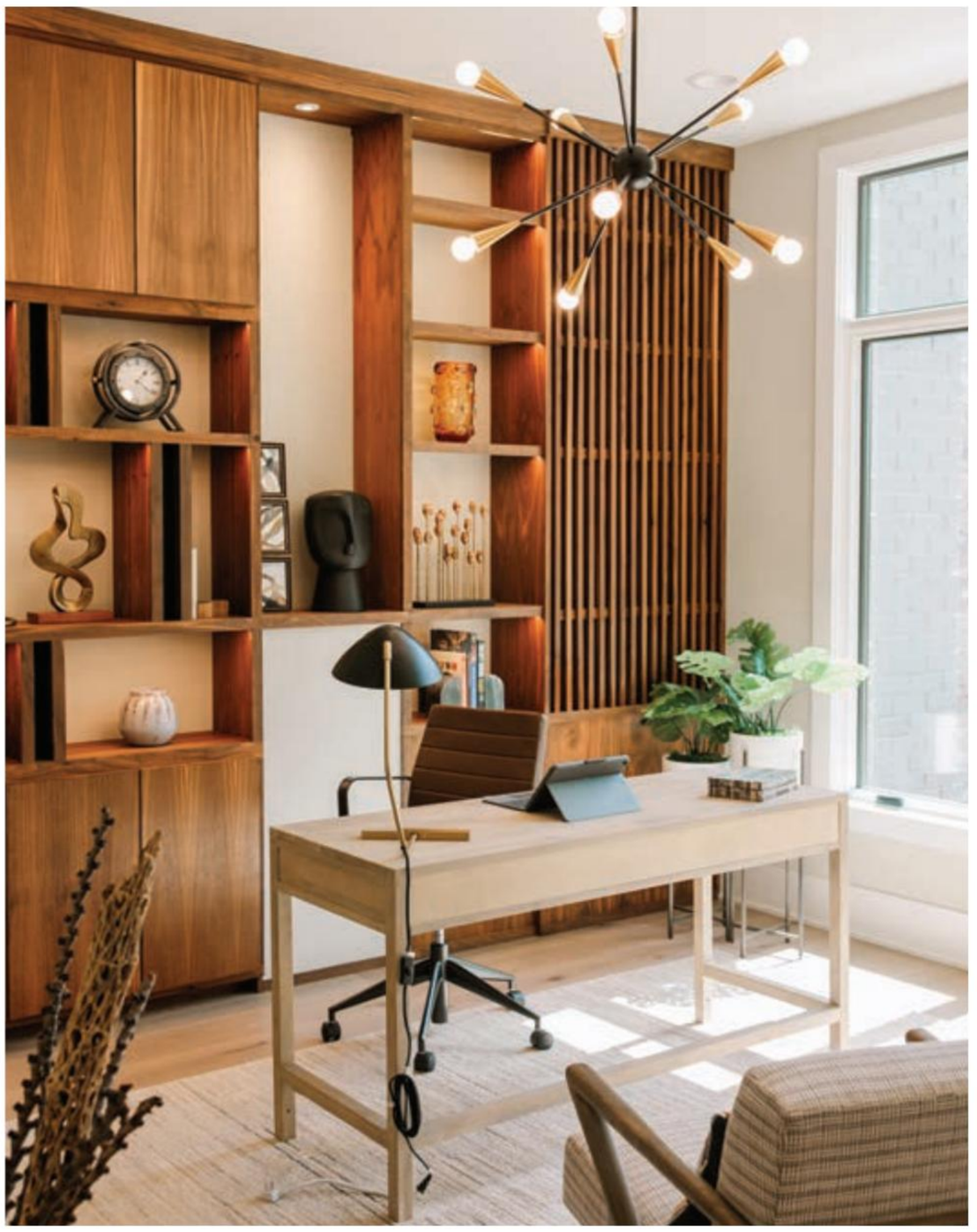
# MEET THE BUILDERS

## Blueprints tell you how a home is built. Builders tell you why. We caught up with the experts leading the way in six distinct areas

BY TAYLOR BOWLER | PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BUILDERS







## LUXURY LIVING: AR HOMES **RALEIGH MONTEREY BAY**

In the past six years, an influx of high-income buyers has transformed the Triangle's luxury housing market. Realtor.com reports that million-dollar listings in Raleigh-Cary grew 23.8% year over year, reflecting a broader shift in what buyers are seeking. Many buyers relocating from more expensive housing markets are bringing greater purchasing power—and new expectations for design, technology, and personalization.

That shift has fueled demand for custom residences, and AR Homes Raleigh Monterey Bay specializes in those spaces. The team creates luxury homes ranging from

$2 million to $6 million, with a portfolio spanning communities including Brixley, Summit Terrace, North Ridge Country Club, and Midtown.

"Almost every new homeowner wants a downstairs primary suite and guest suite," says Samantha Wagaman, sales and marketing associate for AR Homes Raleigh Monterey Bay. "That's a standard feature now, along with a well-appointed office—and sometimes two offices in the home. A four-car garage with solar and car chargers are becoming more prominent features as well."

Architecturally, she says, elevation choices are broader than they were pre-COVID, with more modern and transitional architectural styles versus traditional brick homes. Of all the changes Wagaman has seen in luxury home design over the past decade, outdoor living has undergone the biggest transformation.

"It's not just the pool, but ceiling heaters, motorized screens, a spa, and maybe a pavilion or kitchen by the pool," she says. "Outdoor living has become the fourth important area of the home after kitchens, bedrooms, and the entertaining areas."



## INFILL INNOVATION: McNEILL BURBANK HOMES

An “infill home” may not be a term you hear every day, but the concept is simple: building a new home on a vacant or underused lot within an established neighborhood. Rather than expanding into undeveloped land, infill construction creates new housing where communities already exist, blending fresh design with familiar streetscapes.

“To us, an infill home is about creating something new that honors what already exists,” says Tanya Matzen, vice president and general manager of McNeill Burbank Homes. “It's a way for homeowners to enjoy the best of both worlds: the charm and sense of place found in mature communities with the quality and comfort of new construction.”

Since 1989, McNeill Burbank has built a portfolio spanning single-family homes, luxury townhomes, and custom residences across the Triangle, from the $300,000s to custom properties exceeding $2.6 million. The builder’s infill expertise is especially evident in established neighborhoods like Five Points, Hayes Barton, and North Hills, where new homes complement the character of their surroundings. McNeill Burbank will showcase three Parade homes this year, ranging from approximately 2,200 to 4,500 square feet.

As the Triangle continues to grow, infill housing is becoming an increasingly important part of the region’s future. A recent city survey found that 83% of respondents see benefits in residential infill, citing reduced sprawl and better use of existing infrastructure as key advantages.

“We see an opportunity to create homes that respect the history and architectural fabric of a neighborhood while introducing the craftsmanship, efficiency, and livability today's homeowners expect,” Matzen says. “Ten years ago, buyers were primarily focused on square footage and open floor plans. Today, they’re asking how a home will support the way they actually live.”



## ATTAINABLE DESIGN: TRUE HOMES

Over the past five years, the median price of a home in the Triangle has climbed from roughly $300,000 to more than $425,000—a jump of more than 40%—forcing many first-time buyers and downsizing empty nesters to rethink what their next home looks like. That's where builders like True Homes see an opportunity. They’re not asking buyers to lower their expectations. They’re redefining what attainable design can be.

Unlike many national builders, its team lives and works in the same communities as its customers, giving them firsthand insight into what today's buyers are really looking for. And increasingly, it's about much more than square footage. Homeowners want spaces that support the way they live now while offering long-term value through energy efficiency, affordability, flexibility, and a strong sense of community.

"It's about designing smarter, not bigger," says Nick Chapman, market partner at True Homes. "Open-concept floor plans, abundant natural light, higher ceilings, flexible living spaces, and thoughtful storage solutions make every square foot work harder. We focus on creating homes that live larger than their footprint while delivering the features today's families value most."







## BESPOKE BUILDS: **ICG HOMES**

The post-pandemic years have transformed homeowners' priorities. Instead of designing with resale in mind, they're investing in spaces tailored to the way they actually live. The result is an increased demand for features like dedicated fitness rooms, golf simulators, and guest suites that can serve multiple purposes over time.

"We're seeing buyers prioritize features that match their lifestyle, whether that's a prep kitchen, a wine room, a whiskey lounge, or other spaces tailored to their interests," says ICG Homes CEO Ryan Perry.

With four homes featured in this year's Parade, ICG Homes brings a portfolio that stretches across Chatham, Franklin, Harnett, Johnston, and Wake counties. Its custom residences range from approximately $1.275 million to $4.85 million, reflecting a shift toward homes designed around the personalities and lifestyles of the people who live in them. One of Perry's favorite examples? Hidden rooms disguised behind custom bookcases and secret doors—details that transform a home from beautiful to unforgettable.

He says a first-floor primary suite is now a top priority, and many clients request a secondary guest suite on the main level for visiting family or aging parents. If budget weren't a factor, Perry would put an elevator in every home.

"An elevator makes everyday life more convenient, whether you're carrying groceries, moving luggage, or simply getting from one floor to another," he says. "More importantly, it allows homeowners to age in place and enjoy their home comfortably for years to come. It's one of those features that many people don't think they need, until they have it."









## FLEX SPACES: **HOMES BY DICKERSON**

Home has taken on new meaning since the pandemic. As kitchens became offices and spare bedrooms became classrooms, homeowners began asking more from the spaces they live in.

Homes by Dickerson has embraced that change by designing homes with highly personalized flex spaces that reflect the way people live today. Beyond the home office, buyers are incorporating features like private home theaters, hidden speakeasies, sculleries that keep the main kitchen clutter-free, and even dedicated dog-wash stations.

“I think we'll start seeing more of what we're calling ‘the family ready room,’” says Jon Showalter, COO of Homes by Dickerson. “Think of a laundry room or mudroom with a rear entry off the garage that's more like the size of a bedroom. You've got built-in cabinetry around your washer and dryer, a small island with some work counter space … maybe that's where you wrap your Christmas presents. All the kids' soccer gear goes there. It's where the dog leashes are. We'll see more of that creep into floor plans, and into more affordable housing."

Homes by Dickerson will showcase eight homes in this year's Parade, with Showalter serving as the 2026 Parade of Homes chair. After nearly five decades of participation, he's come to believe the most memorable homes aren't defined by a single showstopping feature, but by the life they invite homeowners to imagine.

“You want the house to tell a story,” he says. “You want people to think, *I see my family gathering in this courtyard. I'm going to entertain here.* They see their friends and family gathered around a table and six bottles of half-empty wine. People are buying that story.”

## THE CONNECTED HOME: **TRI POINTE HOMES**

A decade ago, smart thermostats were a novelty, and saving water often meant accepting lower-flow fixtures that didn’t deliver the same experience. Today, advances in technology and design have made efficiency a seamless part of everyday life. According to industry research, more than 70% of U.S. households now use at least one smart home device, from connected thermostats and lighting to security systems and appliances.

Tri Pointe Homes is showcasing that evolution with five homes in the 2026 Triangle Parade of Homes, including contemporary townhomes, ranch-style homes designed for the 55 and older market, and entry-level single-family homes in amenity-rich communities.

“Now people expect a Wi-Fi mesh system so you have coverage everywhere,” says James Flanagan, vice president of community experience at Tri Pointe Homes. “Something as simple as your garage door opener is tied to Wi-Fi. Buyers look for electric car plug-ins for the garage. Those used to be optional; now they’re just part of homes today.”

Beyond convenience, buyers are paying closer attention to what they can’t always see. Indoor air quality has become a priority, with features like MERV 13 air filters that help remove pollen and allergens. Energy-efficient appliances, windows, and HVAC systems are also becoming standard expectations rather than upgrades.

For buyers considering an older home, Flanagan offers one piece of advice: Don’t overlook the systems behind the walls. An aging HVAC system or inefficient windows may not be the most exciting features, but they can have a major impact on long-term comfort and ownership costs.

RAGAN Realty

YOUR *Home* TEAM



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, ONE HOME AT A TIME.

The Ragan Realty Team is proud to support this year's Parade of Homes. As you tour the latest styles, floor plans, and builder craftsmanship on display, know that we're here for what comes next - helping you buy, sell, or invest.

MELISSA RAGAN, REALTOR ®

919-985-6305
melissa@raganrealtyteam.com
www.ragansellsraleigh.com
Ragan Realty Team

powered by CHOICE RESIDENTIAL

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL!

@raganteamsellsraleigh

GROW YOUR BUSINESS WITH US!



*5 West* is the most trusted and widely read local publication in Western Wake—connecting engaged readers with the services and products you offer.

5 WEST
Celebrating the 5 Towns of Western Wake

919.782.4710 | 5westmag.com/advertise

Keep informed about the latest news and happenings in the Triangle.




SUBSCRIBE NOW

# BUILDER SPOTLIGHT

## A conversation with Ryan Speight, founder and owner of Speight Built Custom Homes

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPEIGHT BUILT CUSTOM HOMES

As the Triangle continues to attract more residents, a new generation of builders is helping define what home looks like in the region. Among them is Ryan Speight of Speight Built Custom Homes, whose attention to craftsmanship and thoughtful design has made him a builder to watch in this year's Parade of Homes. Speight launched his custom homebuilding career in Wake County in 2007 and has been a Parade of Homes participant ever since. "As a builder, the Parade of Homes is a unique opportunity to showcase the quality and detail of the homes that we build," he says. "It's hands down our best marketing opportunity each year."

We caught up with Speight to get his thoughts on what today's homeowners want, the details that define a well-built home, and what keeps him excited about the craft nearly two decades into his career.

*— Taylor Bowler*



***What goes into participating in this event?***

Similar to a sporting event, we apply tremendous pressure to ourselves to dream up creative designs and bring them to life while hitting the deadline for the start of the Parade each year. It's a rewarding experience to hear positive feedback from the public walking through the completed home and to speak with guests about their favorite aspects.

***What design details do you obsess over that most homeowners may never notice?***

Everything from a home's position on the lot, water management for our homeowner and neighbors, and proper acclimation of all materials prior to installation all play a very important role in how a home will age. This is something that, unfortunately, can be hard for buyers to understand. However, this becomes apparent as homes age.

***How have your clients' priorities changed over the last six years?***

Clients now, more than ever, want to ensure they are getting a good value for their dollar. I believe there is a feeling that homes are overpriced, especially since COVID. Since this is not the case, we work hard to provide extreme transparency to our clients so they can make intelligent decisions as we construct their home.

***What detail are you most excited for people to discover this year?***

My excitement always lies in the overall feel of the home. A home can have one or two nice features, but it's far more important for it to feel cohesive both inside and out. When clients notice this and comment on it we know we've hit the mark.

**QUICK-HIT QUESTIONS:**

**Most underrated room in a house?**
The foyer. It's the first room that any guest sees when entering the home. Thoughtfully planning this room creates a larger impact than most people realize.

**A design trend you're loving right now?**
Funky wallpaper selections and tile designs.

**A trend you're ready to retire?**
The color gray. It used to be all the rage, but it can be very difficult to pair selections with.

**Favorite building material to work with?**
Natural slabs for countertops, backsplashes, and fireplace walls.

**One feature every custom home should have?**
A scullery. This room allows homeowners to store their countertop appliances and other items that would usually be left in the main kitchen, giving the kitchen a cleaner look.

**Biggest misconception about building a custom home?**
The volume of decisions that need to be made.

**If budget were no object, what's the one upgrade you'd put in every home?**
A well thought-out pool and grilling area.

# BEHIND THE PARADE

## Industry veteran Bill Smith takes us inside the annual homebuilders showcase

PHOTO COURTESY OF BILL SMITH

Few people know the Triangle Parade of Homes from as many angles as Bill Smith, who recently founded Violet Rose Realty LLC after years in residential real estate, including a tenure with Coldwell Banker HPW. He also served as division president for a local homebuilder and was president of the Johnston County Home Builders Association in 2022 and 2023.

The Parade of Homes began in 1965 with 14 homes. By 2025, the event featured more than 250 across 178 new-home communities. The showcase spans roughly nine counties in the Triangle region, including Wake, Franklin, Johnston, Orange, Chatham, and Harnett.

Part inspiration, part open house, the Parade of Homes offers an inside look at the region's most impressive new residences. Visitors crisscross the Triangle in search of dream kitchens, spa-worthy bathrooms, fresh design inspiration, and the occasional home that makes them rethink everything they thought they wanted in a house.

Homes are open across three weekends, usually the last weekend in September and the first two weekends in October, with some properties getting as many as 5,000 visitors. Builders such as John Rufty, Rex Bost, Lloyd Builders, and Sage Built often use the event to showcase new materials, finishes, and floor plans.

"You have so many different price ranges," Smith says. "You have people that have done amazing things with little townhomes, 1,500 or 1,600 square feet, and then you go to some of those top-end builders and look at some of the products. They're cutting-edge products that people maybe haven't even seen yet."

And that's part of the fun. You don't have to be shopping for a new house to enjoy it. Plenty of people pick a handful of homes, map out a route, and come away with ideas for their own project. Maybe it's a kitchen layout, a wine cellar attached to the kitchen, a porch with a built-in smoker, or some tile that suddenly makes your current floors feel deeply inadequate.

"You go through and say, 'Oh my God, I've never seen a tile or a luxury vinyl plank that looks so much like real wood,'" Smith says. "It is an incredible place for the suppliers of products to showcase their materials."



Builders enter the showcase through the Home Builders Association. Each property is listed in a Parade of Homes book with photos, square footage, pricing, bedrooms, special features, and often floor plans. Homes can also be judged by category, based on price range and square footage. Winners receive gold, silver, or bronze awards, which are announced at a banquet before the final weekend.

Many of the homes on the tour are for sale. Others serve as models for buyers who may want to build something similar in that community. Smith says that exposure is a huge benefit for builders, and it also helps people discover parts of the Triangle they might not have explored yet.

"There's really no downside to it," Smith says. "It's all plus."

For longtime residents, the Parade of Homes is a chance to see what's changing. For newcomers, it can be a crash course in Triangle towns, neighborhoods, builders, and lifestyles. For the rest of us, it's just a really good excuse to walk through beautiful homes and quietly say, "Can we afford to do this to our house?"

*— Dathan Kazsuk*

# BY THE NUMBERS

**61**
Years the Triangle Parade of Homes has been running

**119**
Homes featured on the 2026 Parade

**8**
Counties represented in the 2025 event, spanning Wake, Durham, Orange, Chatham, Johnston, Franklin, and Harnett counties

**87**
Communities included on the tour route in 2026

**25**
Award categories recognizing standout homes and builders

**$299,000 to $2.8 million**
The price range represented in 2026

**800**
Square feet of the smallest home on the tour

**20,000**
Square feet of the largest home on the tour

**3**
Weekends of free tours (Oct. 3–4, 9–11 & 16–18)

# THE NEW LUXURY

Standout features to look for on the 2026 Triangle Parade of Homes:

### QUIET ROOMS
Cozy retreats for reading, meditation, or unplugging.

### WELLNESS SPACES
Spa-inspired bathrooms, yoga studios, saunas, and recovery rooms.

### STATEMENT LIGHTING
Sculptural pendants, layered lighting, and oversized fixtures that double as art.

### HIDDEN STORAGE
Walk-in pantries, sculleries, drop zones, and custom built-ins that keep clutter out of sight.

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY
Smart thermostats, EV charging, and high-performance insulation.

### HOME GYMS
Dedicated fitness rooms replacing the traditional bonus room.

### COFFEE & BEVERAGE BARS
Built-in espresso stations, wine storage, and entertaining spaces beyond the kitchen.

### PET-FRIENDLY PERKS
Built-in feeding stations, dog-washing rooms, and pet nooks.

### INDOOR-OUTDOOR LIVING
Retractable walls, covered porches, outdoor kitchens, and year-round entertaining spaces.

### FLEXIBLE LIVING
Rooms designed to shift seamlessly from office to guest suite to playroom as families' needs evolve.

PHOTO BY STOCK.ADOBE.COM–PIXMEEUP

# BEYOND THE CUL-DE-SAC

## Proof that community doesn't require a backyard

BY AMANDA LAMB

Everyone sang as 2-year-old Gwen giggled, spinning around in the lobby of our downtown Raleigh condominium in her pointy paper birthday hat that sat perched atop a mass of blonde, sweaty curls.

Gwen is not my granddaughter. In fact, I'm not related to her in any way, nor is anyone else in our building with the exception of her parents. But she is the youngest member of our community, and it felt fitting for all of us to celebrate her birthday.

I remember when I first moved downtown from the suburban Cary neighborhood where I raised my children. People would ask me, "Aren't you worried about losing your connection to your community?" The truth is, I was a little concerned. We had raised our family in a cul-de-sac where neighbors watched out for each other. We gathered to celebrate holidays. Our children grew up playing together in the stream behind our houses, building forts in the woods, and dangling from a tire swing. But my kids are grown now. We are empty nesters and ready for a change.

I knew that my Cary friends would always be in my life no matter where I lived, but I also embraced the opportunity to build a new community, one forged in the shared experiences of urban living, which is more elusive in side-by-side homes where it's easy to silo ourselves.

What I quickly learned when we moved into our building, which is home to 20-somethings just starting out in life up to 70-somethings enjoying the fruits of retirement and nearby grandchildren, is that your neighbors define your community no matter where you live.

I got involved with the social committee, where I helped arrange everything from the twice-monthly social gatherings with themes ranging from game night to charcuterie making, to the summer cookout and the winter holiday party. But more than just gathering socially, we have a thread where neighbors in the 56 apartments share concerns (a water leak), needs (a vacant parking spot or help moving a piece of furniture), and items (books they are donating to the community). The speed at which neighbors step up to help other neighbors in need here is unprecedented. Whether someone needs a tape measure, an egg for a recipe, or an Advil, the request is met with multiple replies of: "I'll leave it by your door."

Currently, we only have two children in the building. We got to know Gwen during the inclement weather this past winter when we would meet in the lobby for impromptu breakfasts and hot cocoa. She would run around, interact with all of us, and laugh out loud as she careened in her half-on, half-off snowsuit from one surrogate grandparent to another. Her parents thanked us profusely for giving her some attention and activity during the cabin fever we were all experiencing.

As I watched her, I found myself thinking about children who grow up in New York City. People often lament the lack of a yard to play in. Thankfully, we have a great deal of green space on our property and plenty of parks nearby. But I realized that for a child to grow, for any of us to grow, we don't just need green space. We need the sustenance that comes from our human connections. Like fertilizer, community feeds us in unseen ways that nourish our souls.

I would argue it's just as important as the air we breathe. Ⓜ



*Amanda Lamb is an award-winning journalist, author, and podcast host best known for her decades covering crime and courts in North Carolina. A longtime reporter at WRAL-TV, she has written 13 books and now focuses on storytelling through podcasts, public speaking, and her media company, Stage Might Communications. Follow her at* ***facebook.com/stagemight*** *or visit* ***alambauthor.com****.*



Modern Luxury Meets Tranquil Living in Laurel Hills | 4210 White Pine Drive, Raleigh, NC

# No two families live the same.
# Neither should their homes.

SPEIGHT BUILT
CUSTOM HOMES

Learn more

Custom homes built with intention, craftsmanship,
and the details that make a house yours.

speightbuilt.com | 919.889.5694




BAILEY'S

FINE JEWELRY

CARY, NC | RALEIGH, NC | ROCKY MOUNT, NC | GREENVILLE, NC | LOS ANGELES, CA

WWW.BAILEYBOX.COM