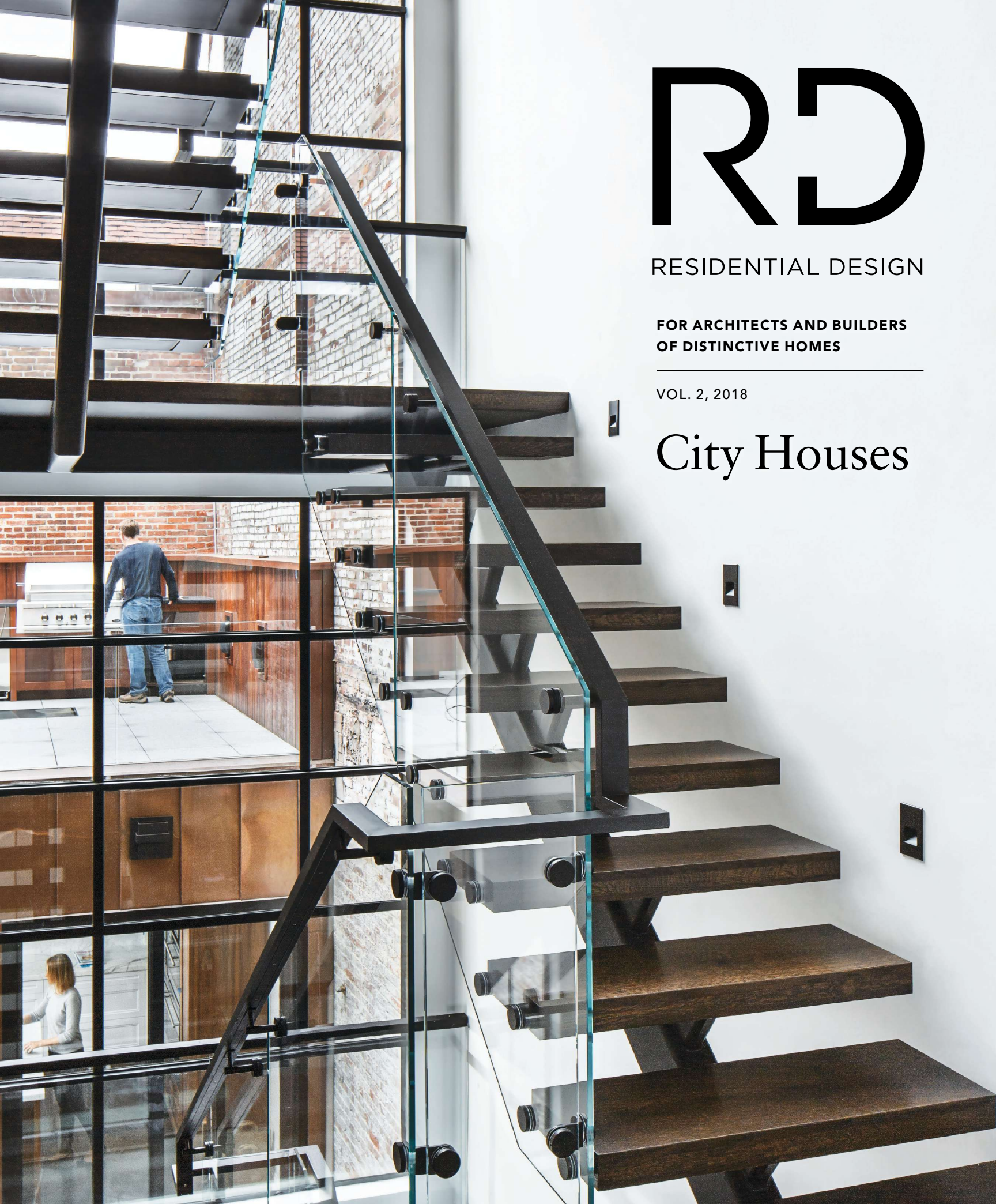

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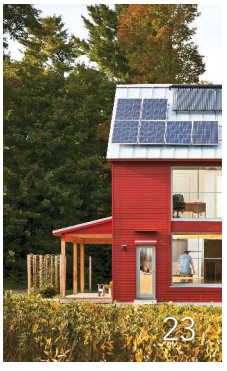
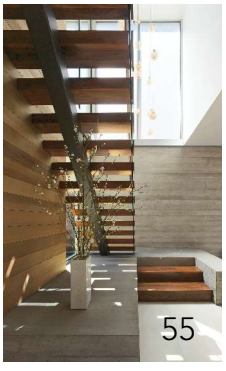
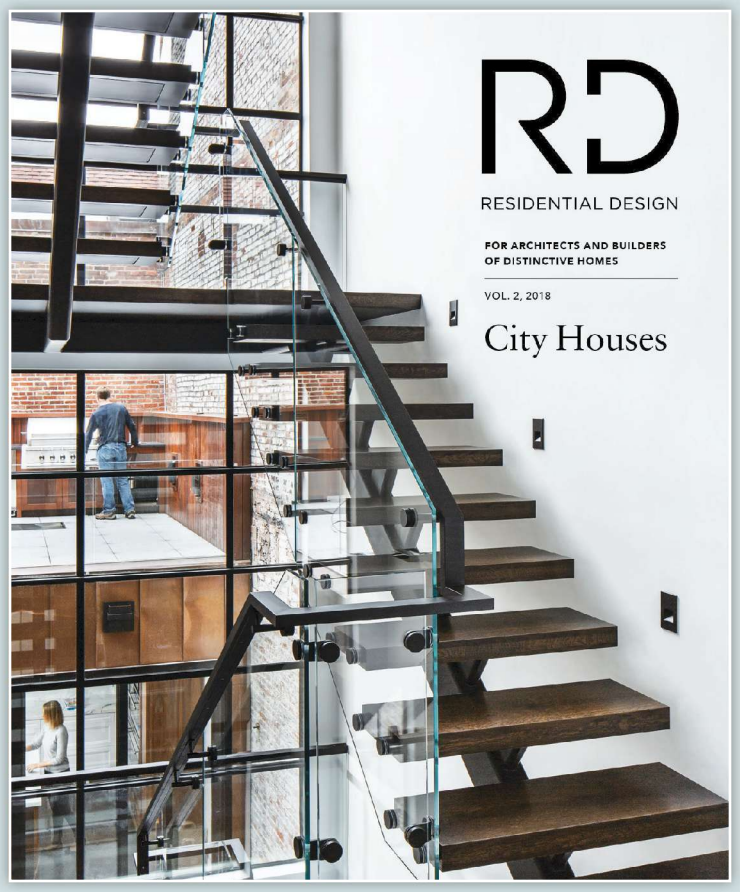




On the Cover: Chestnut Street Townhouse by David Hacin + Associates and The Holland Companies. *Photo: Bob O'Connor Photography*



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Pay It Forward

No matter where you design or what you build, there's context to consider. Architects who design houses on large parcels of pristine land have to go looking for context—often to the natural surroundings of the site, the prevailing climate, and the wants and wishes of their clients. However, architects who design houses in the city have volumes of context, codes, and regulations to digest, and often historic commissions to please or appease as well. Although the latter constraints seem like a hassle, I think, for the most part, they're forces for good.

When a new house or a substantially renovated house is added to the existing fabric of a neighborhood, it has to measure up to the best of what's there. And for exacting, responsible designers, there's always room for improvement and invention, too. That sets the bar high, indeed—or it should.

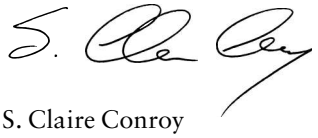
The next important consideration is, how much do you try to make your building fit in and how much do you aim for it to stand out? That's the nut of numerous arguments, injunctions, and court battles, for sure. But many bad outcomes can be stanched by approaching the neighborhood and other interested parties with sensitivity right from the start.

In this issue, we look at prime examples of custom infill work. Our cover story delves into the first new house built in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood in 50 years. The process of getting it approved through a highly protective historic commission was not without pain, but the clients were smart and strategic in their choice of David Hacin, FAIA, as their architect.

There was much pressure to get this right. Everyone was watching the new precedent David and his firm would set for the storied neighborhood. Would his new building tuck timidly into the row of old buildings on Chestnut Street, or would it assert its presence in some provocative way? Somehow, miraculously, his new townhouse design does neither.

Like a responsible doctor, David understands that the primary goal of building in a historic city is to "do no harm." His special talent lies in absorbing what's lovely and worthy of preservation from our urban context and distilling those elements into handsome new architecture. Taking the medical analogy further, his specialty is a kind of cosmetic surgery—working artfully and precisely within the incredibly tight tolerances of a townhouse façade, for instance.

How does he pull this off? The answer is in his mindset from the inception. He's not afraid to look to the past for inspiration and beauty, and he knows his clients have modern requirements to satisfy, but he's also committed to building something that will last well beyond his lifetime. He loves modern architecture as much as the next architect, and all his work has to meet its rigorous standard, but David is designing and building for the long haul—not just for the past or the present, but for the future above all else. That's a humbling realization, one that puts hubris properly in its place.



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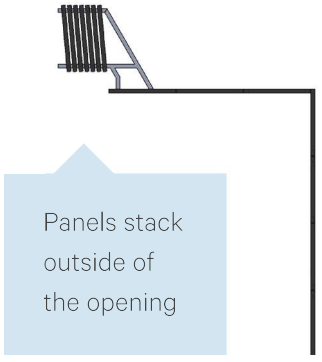

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Party in the Back

MCKINNEY YORK ARCHITECTS
AUSTIN, TEXAS

McKinney York Architects in Austin, Texas, designs buildings of all types, but the common denominator across all of them is their human scale and warmth. Even the bank buildings they design exude an inviting domesticity. This deep understanding of comfort and appeal is especially suited to residential work, and the firm always has a substantial number of dwellings on the boards. This project in Austin's North Loop brings to bear the firm's problem-solving abilities, its expertise in residential work, and its design ingenuity—all distilled into a compact, 850-square-foot accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

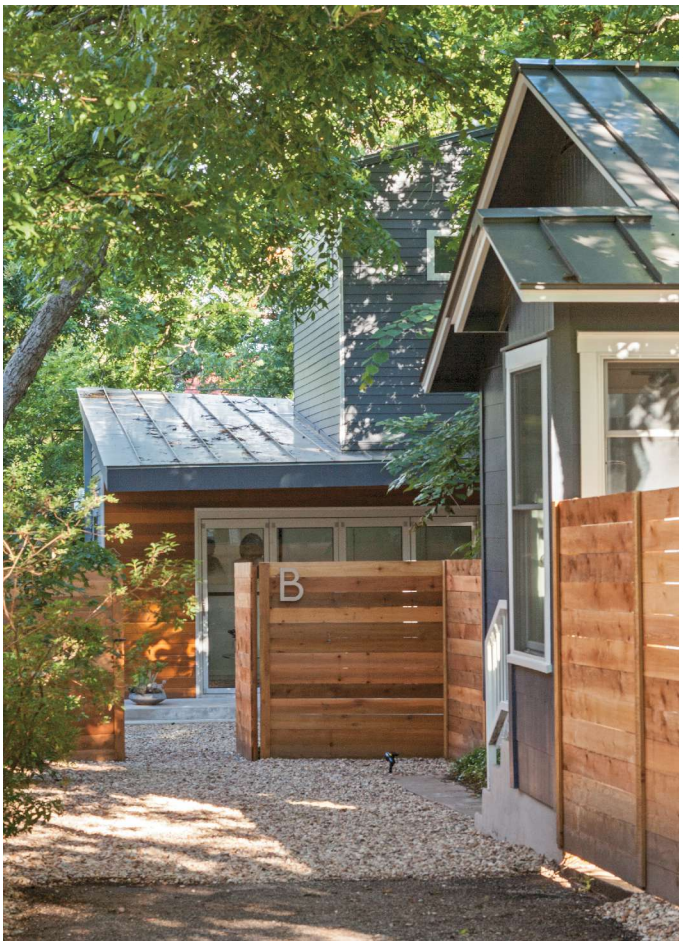
Austin is among the many cities attempting to densify its existing neighborhoods as a way to increase housing inventory and affordability. The jurisdiction is already several iterations into its revision of residential zoning codes, and even more generous codes are on the horizon.

The client who brought this project to architect Heather McKinney, FAIA, and project architect Aaron Taylor, AIA, already had a small house on the property—a 1930s bungalow that was only 940 square feet, with just two bedrooms and a single bathroom, on a relatively ample 6,200-square-foot lot. Many homeowners in these older neighborhoods, faced with increasing property values in up-and-coming markets, are choosing to blow out the main house on the lot—maximizing square footage, but also frequently violating the scale of the street.

This client, however, understood the value of his alley-access lot and decided to take a more progressive approach to its development. He knew he wanted a second dwelling, but was unsure of his ultimate goal for the property and wanted to keep all options open. So, he pushed the architects to work in as much function and livability as they could into its highly constrained envelope.

The result is a two bedroom, two-and-a-half bath house with commodious indoor/outdoor living options and—believe it or not—a two-car garage. Such a program can support a wide variety of domestic arrangements—roommates, a small family, a live-work flat, and more.

Heather and Aaron think this project offers a great template for how to address and answer the potential of ADU-friendly residential codes.



All project photos: Thomas McConnell. Portraits: Kore Howell Photography

Top and above: The new alley dwelling sits just behind the original bungalow on the property. Heather McKinney and Aaron Taylor hope the accessory dwelling will spark ideas about how to implement Austin's ADU codes.

RD: Tell us about the neighborhood and context for this project.

HM: This is one of our inner city's really desirable, wonderful neighborhoods just north of the core. It's noted for its bungalows, its nice scale of houses, and big, mature trees. It's a very walkable neighborhood. I think it would fall under New Urbanism—there are small groceries relatively close by. A lot of people live here and bicycle to the university or to work.

Far left, left, and opposite page: The key to the building's success is the flexibility of the space. A folding door system can change the floor plan in just a few moves.

Fortunately, a lot of the streets have alleys, which lent itself to the idea of doing this alley dwelling.

Austin has been working for a while on a form-based code to help deal with problems of affordability in its close-in neighborhoods. It's giving enormous flexibility to the owners of property for how they can use it in the future. There are lots of plusses from an urban planning standpoint, but among the greatest are keeping neighborhoods intact and allowing people to age in place.

The code we were working with for this project was more constrained with regard to size and placement of the building, but it still allowed us some creativity in the amount of living space that can be open air or enclosed. The new code is a lot more expansive with where ADUs can be and is less restrictive all around.

AT: There is some possibility that the current version on the table may be dialed back a bit, however.

HM: We went to the limit of what was possible at the time. I think our client was really open. He wasn't sure what he was going to do, whether he was going to sever it and sell it or rent it. It allowed us to push the envelope.

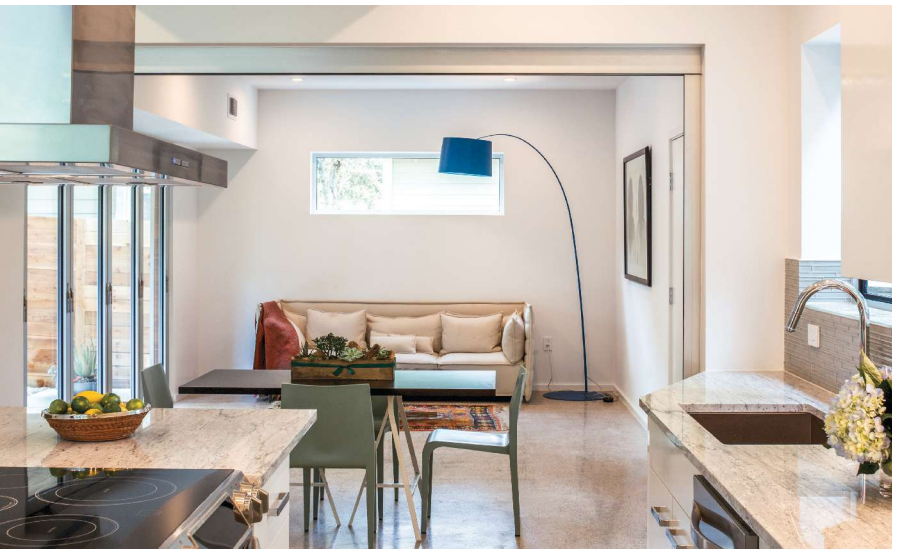
AT: It's possible to condo-ize the units. It would be very unlikely to subdivide the lot, as the city of Austin has minimum lot requirements. The owner was thinking he might stay in the bungalow, rent both units, or a third option would be condo-ize both and sell them. So, there are two parking spaces for the rear unit. There's an open air but private feel to one of the slots. It can be an outdoor terrace, or you can put a car there. It could also be used for something else, like studio space.

HM: The lot came with the almost ubiquitous challenge of trees. There's a great big tree right between those two garage pieces. But when you're upstairs, it's like you're in a treehouse. It provides some screening and the foliage gives you some privacy. Those live oaks always have leaves.

AT: The bungalow in front has siding. We wanted to do siding that was sympathetic with that. And the owner was in the process of reroofing the bungalow with metal, so we matched that. We tried to be sympathetic to the color palette of the bungalow, and kept the basic window sizes similar. For the front entry porch, we introduced some cedar.

HM: We wanted to make sure that coming down the driveway was warm and inviting. There's a fence that controls that

Above: All found space is put to good use, such as this roof deck atop a garage. Extra ceiling height and lots of glazing make a small room live large.



space, then you walk through a little gate to that back courtyard, and there's a wooden enclosure.

AT: There are windows in each building that are winking at each other. The porch on the bungalow opens to the porch on the ADU. They share a congenial but private relationship.

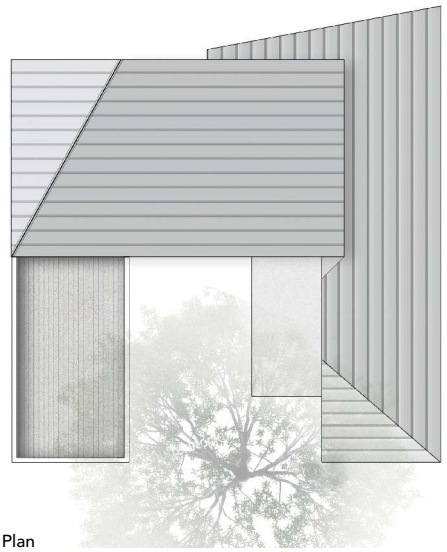
On the interior, we wanted something very clean and modern, but not too cold. Wall finishes are matte-finished drywall. The first floor has a polished slab floor, and it was pretty simple and efficient from a budget standpoint. We did spend a lot on the NanaWall that allows the living room to close or open to the outdoor space.

HM: You can fold it all the way or roll it around and subdivide the living/dining space. The living room can become open air, and the conditioned space is at the juncture of where the kitchen is. Or it can slide around in an L and enclose the living room, then the whole first floor is undivided and conditioned. For a big chunk of the year, you're living in an almost Hawaiian living room. In these shoulder months, it's really nice to be able to quickly change the arrangement of indoor and outdoor space.

There's also a great roof deck that makes that second-floor bedroom space feel big.

I really have to brag on Aaron, because the thing I love best about this building is the folding form of the roof. There are some wonderful, extreme shapes to the space that make it feel airy and unique. It doesn't feel like a box.

For me, this little building is like a little origami space that can fold into so many different ways to use it. That ability to morph your space according to who you are and how you're living is the key to such a small space.



Roof Plan

Second Floor Plan

First Floor Plan

Drawings: Courtesy McKinney York Architects

Above: The origami-like roof structure enlivens the architecture of the house and improves the livability of its indoor spaces.

AT: A couple of houses down, another alley unit went up about the same time, and there are garages and garden sheds back there. There's one house that has a great playhouse in back. On the streets themselves, the houses are all prim and proper and behave themselves. But there's more license in the back, and the scale is really fun.

HM: There's a real feel of freedom with the space that reads through in the architecture and the landscape. Where the cars pull in, we filled in with gravel to make a little court space. It's pervious, very low maintenance, and allows that landscape space to breathe more.

For us, the ADU solution has so much merit compared to what was happening before. People were buying bungalows and adding looming growths to them. It ruined the whole feel of the neighborhood with these alien creatures added onto the tops and around the houses.

This building is discreet, and it strengthens the character of the neighborhood. RD

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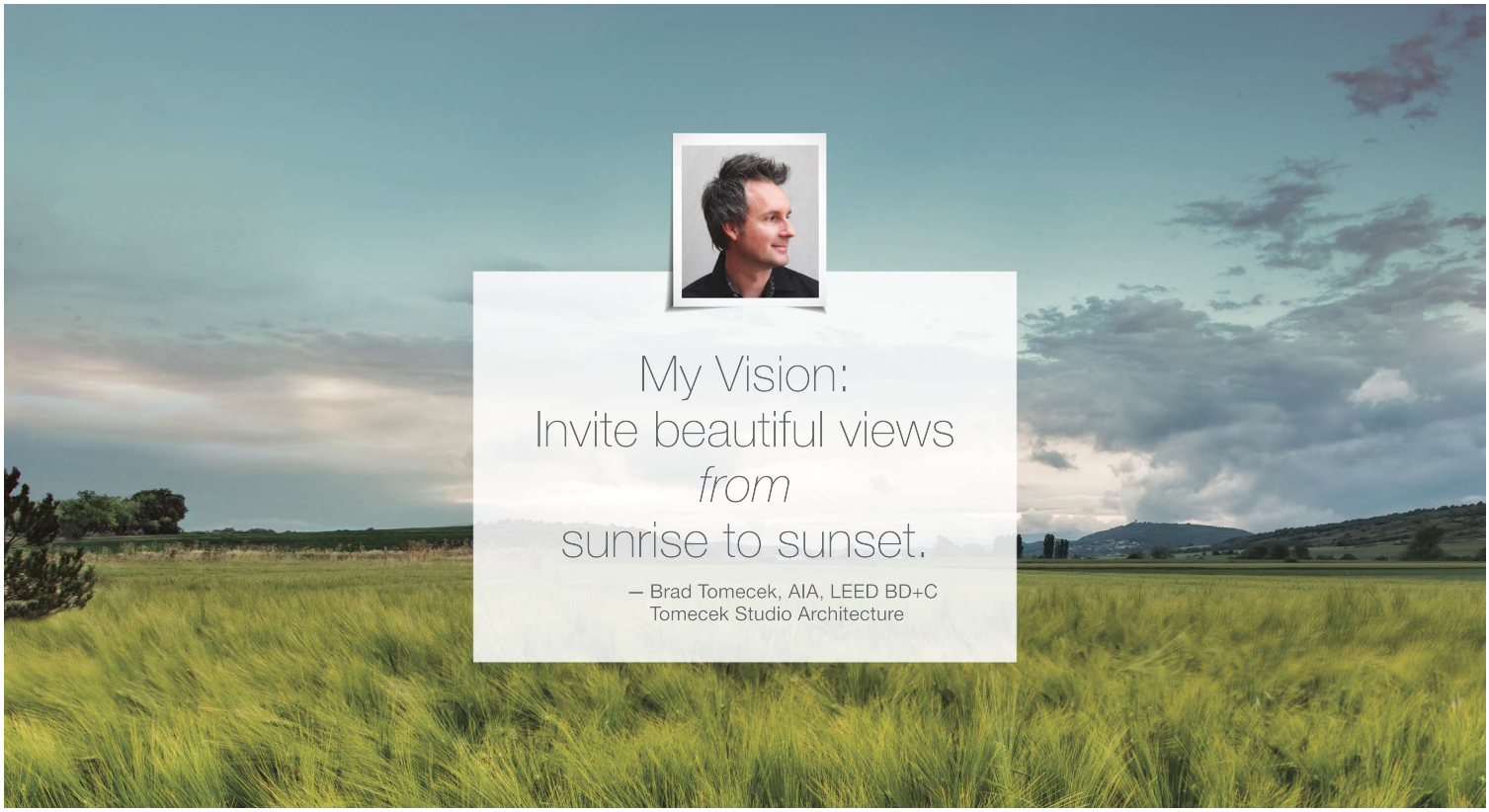

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Remaking History

STUDIOWTA
NEW ORLEANS

Photo: Zack Smith Photography

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Clockwise from top left: StudioWTA partners (left to right) Julie A. Babin, AIA, Tracie Ashe, and Wayne Troyer, FAIA. The interior of 704 Marigny preserves elements of the orginal 1800s dwelling while inserting obviously modern elements. The streetside elevations were restored and the original storefront window reopened for holiday displays.

Few cities in the United States conjure the past as readily as New Orleans. Walking through the French Quarter or Garden District neighborhoods, especially, has the power to send you back in time and to what feels like an entirely different country—one more lushly romantic than ours. But even in New Orleans, time does not stand still. Humans continue to alter the city's buildings and surroundings—to repair, renew, and reimagine.

Hurricane Katrina hastened some changes, of course, and reshaped everything touched by its wake. Twelve years have passed since the storm, and the remarkably resilient city has rebounded strongly. Coming so close to losing such an important and beautiful city has reawakened appreciation for its charms, and fueled investment in rebuilding while addressing some of its flaws along the way.

Katrina and its aftermath have kept architect Wayne Troyer, FAIA, and studioWTA very busy. He was closely involved with planning efforts after the storm and has always been a strong advocate for preserving what's best about the city. Looking ahead while keeping an eye on the past comes naturally to the New Orleans native and has served him well in practice there.

The firm, which Wayne leads with partners Tracie Ashe and Julie Babin, AIA, excels at parsing and curating New Orleans' unique eclecticism and, simultaneously, interjecting modern sensibility and delight. The firm balances a mix of remodeling, new construction, single-family, multifamily, commercial,

Photo: Sara Essex Bradley

Photo: Sara Essex Bradley

Above, left to right: Although modern, the Webster Street Residence applies antebellum lessons in climate control and street presence.

and institutional projects—but houses and housing make up the majority of the work. The architects fully embrace a charming historic building or a completely modern new one, but what they never lose sight of is how it pairs with the scale and spirit of the city.

"We do large-scale multifamily, and we'll do a kitchen remodel," says Wayne. "We're like a small firm pretending to be a big one. We have a young staff. Right now, we have five or six licensed architects, and most have gone through their training with our firm. We are 15 people total. We have an active university practice, and we have a $65 million mixed-use project in permitting. Each project informs the others, especially the custom work. And the smaller work gives the younger designers some good experience."

The firm is more than 25 years old, but Wayne added Traci and Julie as partners just two years ago. The wake-up call to initiate succession planning came four years ago, when Wayne lost a dear friend and sometime collaborator, Frederic Schwartz, FAIA, to cancer. A health scare of his own underlined the urgency to take action.

"Fred's death hit me hard. I was working with him at the time, and he got sick and died—with no transition in place and no clear path for his clients," Wayne recalls. "I wanted to make sure that the people who worked with me and supported me over the years had something they could take as their own, and that they would have a basis for continuing their practice. It was something I thought was equitable, and something they appreciated as well. For sure, though, firm ownership is not for the faint of heart."

Both Tracie and Julie have been with the firm for more than 10 years and share Wayne's passion for reviving New Orleans' precarious structures. "I've been very lucky to find the right people. We're very much an open studio practice," he says. "It's why I love coming to the office—getting to have conversations about intention and details and how to work with some new material and put it together."

Old Made New

A background in music (it was his undergraduate degree at Loyola before architecture school at Tulane) underpins Wayne's sense of balance and rhythms in design work. It's something you can see at play in 704 Marigny, a renovation to an early 1800s building in the Marigny district, adjacent to the French Quarter. The structure started life as a corner store with a dependency

Drawing: studioWTA

Above: An axonometric section shows the center living space and its 24-foot-high ceilings.

and was converted to residential in the 1880s with the addition of a second floor. Other renovations over the years lost track of much original detailing, so the architects went about preserving what merit they could still find, while inserting modern functionality and, yes, a little jazz.

"I have always been in love with New Orleans architecture, but I don't want to reproduce it," says Wayne. "I loved working on this project. Part of it is understanding what the house was before and how it functioned. There's always research into the history of it. And there's a real refinement to how we approach the historic buildings while bringing in the contemporary. We want to clearly make what's new new. Any new element is detailed in a very minimal way or it's unabashed about what it is. If the materials are considered and detailed well, there's a dialogue between old and new. You get to experience the history, but you allow the modern in, too." In music, they call it "contrapuntal" when two voices or strains weave in among each other—independently but together.

Sometimes the preservation exercise is about finding new purpose for original features. For instance, the old vitrine window on the ground level—it had been closed up when the store became a dwelling, but the team convinced the clients to restore it. "They decorate it now for the seasons—Halloween, Mardi Gras—it's a nice way to interact with the street. No one buys a house like this if they don't want to engage the activity of the neighborhood."

New Made Bold

Negotiating privacy and community is an ever-present challenge with the city's tight lot lines. Layer onto that complexity the insertion of an entirely new, modern dwelling amid a streetscape of 100-year-old houses, and you understand better the daily challenges of studioWTA. But these may be the kinds of challenges that excite them the most.

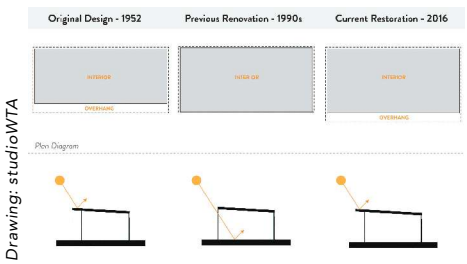
The new, 5,500-square-foot Webster Street Residence is located on a corner lot in an uptown neighborhood of New Orleans. Its intrepid owners had built several buildings before and had strong opinions about what they wanted in their new family house. Essentially, it's a courtyard house that doesn't turn its back on the neighborhood. The courtyard is shielded from view by a sculptural metal fence that will ultimately disappear behind trained vines.

To use Wayne's word, the house is unabashedly modern, but still infused with references to the city's antebellum grandes dames, among them: the soaring first story that finds the coolest ridge of fresh air, the articulated second story shaded by louvered screens like plantation shutters, the layered materials that give the façade depth and grace. "These are all elements of traditional design," says Wayne. "And they're what help make the house contextual."

Mid Mod Remade

There are few New Orleans architectural firms more legendary than Curtis and Davis. They designed many notable buildings in town—including the 1975 Superdome, which was technologically very advanced for its era—and many more out of town and out of the country. When they set up shop in the 1950s, their mainstay was houses. They were inspired by California patio homes, and by Davis' studies at Harvard with Walter Gropius.

They designed the lovely Emerald Street Residence in Lakeshore, La., in 1953. However, the ensuing 60-plus years and a number of misguided

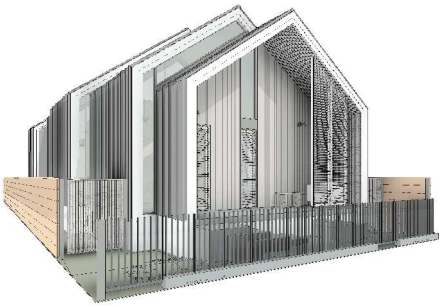


Drawing: studioWTA

Above and right: Sun studies show the effects of restoring the cantilever roof to the altered house.

Photo: Neil Alexander Photography

Drawings: studioWTA



Left and above: This infill house in Bywater distills iconic New Orleans architecture to its essence.

owners had not treated the building kindly. The final blow seemed to come from Hurricane Katrina. Then, nearly 10 years later, a well-traveled, forward-thinking couple stepped in and bought what was left of the house. They hired Wayne to repair and update it, and that was it—or so they thought.

"The house had flooded during Katrina—several feet of water. When I first went to look at it with the clients, I thought it had great potential, but had been ruined by earlier renovations," Wayne recalls. "I said to them, 'If we're going to do it, we have to go back to some of the original elements of the Curtis and Davis house, and bring back its integrity and authenticity."

This is a case where the architects were happy to reproduce original details—to a point. They were lucky enough to have access to the Curtis and Davis plans for the house, which gave them insight into their creative vision but also the practical-minded thinking behind some of the design decisions.

The first imperative was to restore the roof overhang that was part of the original's rear elevation. "What you see now is an addition, because the original overhang was captured and integrated into the square footage of the house," Wayne explains. "That's a southern orientation, so the overhang was critical. The new window wall we designed is where the original cantilever was."

New Weldtex wing walls and sliding glass panels from La Cantina connect the interiors to the landscaped outdoors, while also establishing small, covered patios outside key rooms. This was no small technical feat, as the team had to design and install an entirely new steel structural system to support the new mono-pitch roof and overhang.

Ultimately, the project ended up as a "full gut," says Wayne, including the landscaping and pool. The result, however, looks like it was always there, a natural fit with the spirit of the house and its times.

The extent of the intervention and reinvention came as a bit of a shock to the clients, but they couldn't be happier with the house and the way it lives. The architects brought them along with care. and made sure they were involved in all key decisions. Says Wayne, "The way we've curated our website, we find we attract people who want to try something distinctive. Our clients want their signature on the project, too. We don't dictate, we direct."

What's Old Is New, Etc.

Although Wayne was involved in New Orleans' planning and rebuilding effort, he doesn't feel Katrina's aftermath provided any new information, just new resolve. "We understood a lot about how to build sustainably before Katrina, but the hurricane provided the impetus for the city to adopt some things faster than we might have otherwise," he says.

"In a way, disasters have been good for New Orleans. We now have a levee system that will protect the city for 100 years or so. Investments are coming; we're a top five tourist destination; we have lots of new construction multifamily. Of the nine custom houses we're doing right now, eight are primary residences," he adds.

For the firm that straddles the old and new worlds, there are lessons to be learned from all timelines. Established fundamentals about solar orientation, shading, and natural ventilation coexist with the exciting possibilities and problem-solving that new materials and technologies promise to provide.

Wayne likes to test new ideas and materials on his own house first. That's where he learned to love polycarbonate, a material he's used in many applications since. Now he's about to incorporate Thermory ash into his new kitchen remodel—he's hoping it can replace the ipe he's accustomed to using for its rot resistance and overall hardiness in New Orleans' hot, humid climate.

Apparently, it's not just the young folk in the office who still learn from kitchen remodels, after all.

—*S. Claire Conroy*

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE **10**

GO Home Again

GO LOGIC
BELFAST, MAINE

Photo: ©Trent Bell

Photo: Courtesy GO Logic

Left to right: Design/build partners Matt O'Malia and Alan Gibson

There's something about Maine that draws people from the Midwest. Perhaps it's the similarly harsh winters, but it may also have to do with the state's sunnier skies and its proximity to the crisply blue Atlantic Ocean. Both architect Matt O'Malia and builder Alan Gibson hail from Michigan, but, following separate paths, they each wound their way to Belfast, Maine. After working on a project together, they discovered other similarities, chief among them a passion for environmental design and construction. In 2008, they joined forces to launch the residential design/build firm, GO Logic.

Although it seems like 2008 was not an ideal time to launch a homebuilding company, Matt and Alan had an idea that set them apart from other struggling builders at the time. It was an approach optimized for Maine's harsh climate: Passive House. The stringent energy-conserving building standard was conceived and promulgated in Germany, where Matt honed his architectural education. His time in Frankfurt seeded interest in the building system, which flowered after he and Alan heard architect Katrin Klingenberg speak at a conference about the house she built in Illinois—the first Passive House in the United States.

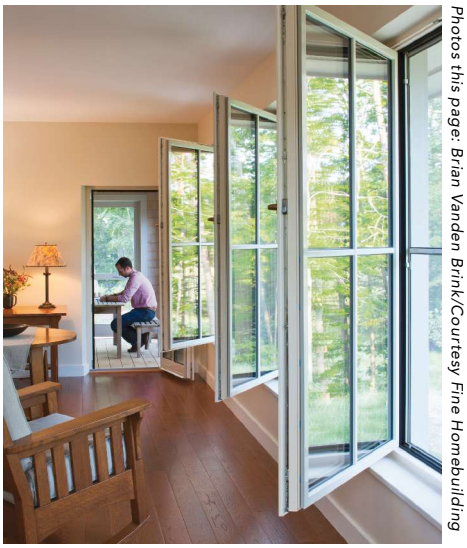
"GO Logic was the original starting-in-the-garage organization," Matt says. "We decided, 'Let's build a project and try to make it to the Passive House standard.' Because that was such a far-fetched agenda anyway, we financed it ourselves and that gave us broad latitude to fail. We got to rethink all the parts and pieces… In looking back, we actually got a lot of it right. Those parts and pieces became the foundational concepts of the way we build now."

The result of their efforts was the 1,500-square-foot GO Home, and it resonated far and wide for many reasons. One, was its simple pitched-roof farmhouse form—it's what a kid draws when asked to draw a house. It was also red, like a barn. The combination created an image that was iconic, embraceable Americana.

Only it was about as high-tech as homebuilding could get circa 2010 when it was completed: a solar array on the roof, triple-pane glazing, an energy recovery ventilator (ERV), a solar hot-water system, and a completely tight, super-insulated building envelope. It was high-tech performance delivered in a package with timeless appeal. The project earned almost instant recognition and credibility for the fledgling firm. GO Home was a modest house with big ambitions to use very little energy—up to 90 percent less than a typical building of the same size. The building became the first certified Passive House in Maine, the 12th one in the U.S., and it also garnered LEED Platinum certification.

Photo: ©Trent Bell

Above: The first GO Home captured hearts and many design awards. It serves as the foundation for a new prefab platform launched by GO Logic.



Photos this page: Brian Vanden Brink/Courtesy Fine Homebuilding

Above and right: GO Logic's custom work inspired many houses in its prefab portfolio. House on a Knoll is a 1,000-square-foot, single-level plan with two bedrooms, a bath, and a screened porch. Below right: The secret sauce for the company's thick, passive house walls and super-insulated foundations.

It was the right building at the right time, when everyone was beginning to rethink the overblown McMansions of the building boom years. "New tech can't look like this alienating thing," says Matt. "So it looks like everyone's house, but a little bit different. It was actually the Maine look, because they already knew how to build for the climate. Anyway, it was important for the house to have a very familiar look, to convey with clarity the message that the future isn't so bad—it's actually kind of fun."

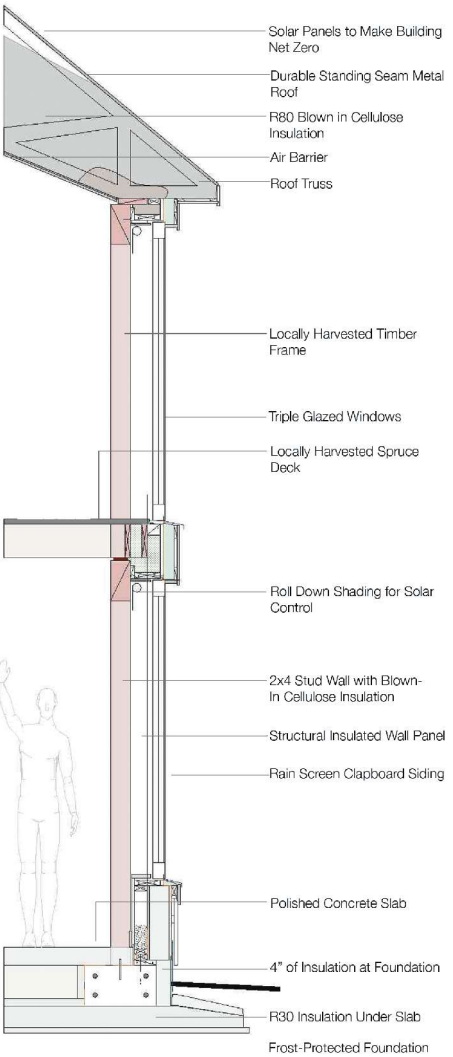
GO Forward

Once the GO Home was completed, and its wake of attention had rippled through the region and farther, the recession was also beginning to wane. Matt and Alan moved on to custom versions of their platform—some more vanguard modern than GO Home, but many similarly contextual. The foundation of them all was their super-insulated, shallow foundation system, which they've since patented. They've also devised panelized wall systems, building shells, and various assemblies that they now build in their own shop to tight tolerances and under controlled conditions.

This kit of parts has proven to be a robust set of components for custom expression and even institutional design. In Europe, PassivHaus is not just a residential standard but one that is perhaps most ideally suited to large-scale building, where downsizing heating equipment results in substantial savings over a long holding period. With single-family houses, the added cost of the building envelope and triple-pane windows are only somewhat mitigated by the savings in heating equipment and overall energy efficiency. (In regions where air conditioning is the big energy load, there's even less economic argument for Passive House at the one-off scale.)

But for bigger projects in cold regions, those heating mechanical and operations savings increase exponentially with square footage. So Matt and Alan are making a concerted effort to point their design/build company in the direction of more multifamily and institutional projects.

In the winter months, the challenge for both building types is preserving the warmth captured from passive solar, those smaller heating systems, body heat, and warmth from machines inside



Drawing: GO Logic

the envelope and keeping the cold outside. The next big complication is the inevitable buildup of moisture.

"When you were a kid, remember how you wore that plastic rain coat in the rain? You ran around and around, and ended up as wet on the inside of that coat as on the outside? Moisture in the house is like that trapped layer of moisture in the plastic coat," Matt explains. "Basically, a passive house is a regular house with a big coat on it. It's literally a 2x6 or 2x8 sheath with additional insulation. Our walls are a foot thick. What we use to handle the moisture is Roxul because it's vapor permeable."

> "It was important for the house to . . . convey with clarity the message that the future isn't so bad—it's actually kind of fun."
>
> —Matt O'Malia

GO Lab

The custom work is moving along at a nice pace, and the institutional work is gathering steam, so to speak—but what excites Matt and Alan the most these days is their new venture with material chemist Joshua Henry: the GO Lab. With Joshua, the team is working on a new product that takes wood waste from local mills and turns it into low-density fiberboard insulation.

"Right now, the material is only made in Europe and is prohibitively expensive to import. Meanwhile, Maine has all of this forest products capacity and mills that are going out of business. The mills used to sell their residuals to make catalogues for retailers. When the internet came around, they were caught flat footed. The mills need to sell the residuals to balance the books." says Matt. "LDF is an amazing product. You take the wood chips, grind them up like a mill, add about 5 percent paraffin and some poly-adhesives—but no formaldehyde—and then, with high steam pressure, you take them through a conveyor press. The steam activates the adhesives and the whole thing wants to expand, but you have it in a press. It all hardens into a rigid board. It has lots of air in it—and it really is just a bunch of wood chips. The steam and energy to run the plant comes from a biomass boiler."

If you're an environmentally inclined designer/builder, this is all pretty heady stuff. The GO Lab has a prototype and is currently working to line up investors to get the factory going and the product to market. Says Matt, "We're trying to hustle this thing along as quickly as we can."

On-the-GO Home

So there's the architecture side of the company steered by Matt, there's the research and development side led by Joshua, and there's the construction side that is Alan's emphasis. To liberate the architecture side to push for larger-scale projects, the company has also launched a separate, fulsome website for its pre-

Photos this page: ©Trent Bell

Clockwise from the top: The Cousins River Residence plan is a single-level, 1,700-square-foot passive house with an optional 656-square-foot garage. It has three bedrooms, two baths, a screened porch, and two decks for ample indoor/outdoor living.

Drawing: GO Logic

Left: The 1,600-square-foot Donkey Universe plan is reminiscent of the original GO Home, but adds 100 square feet for a larger first floor and a full, main-level bath.

fab platform—thegohome.us. It includes the original GO Home, but also larger and smaller designs.

The building blocks include the patented foundation and the panelized products, along with floor plans and full construction documents. The company's well-developed 3D Revit models of each plan allows a degree of customization for clients, but extensive changes are referred to the architecture division, which still takes on custom residential work.

There are GO Home projects under way in Maine, Massachusetts, and New York. The projects are great advertising for the company's capabilities and still turn "a nice profit," says Matt. The partners are adding two or three employees a year to handle the growth all divisions are driving. Current head count is more than 30.

"We're all in one office. There's a clear construction side and a design side, and we're all there working to the same goal. Ten years ago, to innovate the way I thought was necessary required a collaborative process—with all of us pushing in the same direction at the same time. And that's still the case. What's resulted from this process is a great package for high performance building."—*S. Claire Conroy*

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Image: Courtesy Carleton University

Above: Jesse Bird's Upper Squamish Research and Residence took first place in the competition.

A House for the 21st Century

A STUDENT COMPETITION ENVISIONS THE HOUSE OF THE FUTURE

Lately, the news is filled with stories of natural disasters and their impact on our homes and our lives: hurricanes and droughts, fires and floods have each had an impact on some, or many, regions of the country. CRAN itself faced this issue when its symposium, planned for Miami this past September, was canceled due to a hurricane. More than ever before, our national conscience is focused upon the struggle between humans and the natural world. Similarly, the recent Great Recession brought to the fore an equal but less physically obvious upheaval in our economy and social structures: the way we interact, work, and live. How do we, as architects, face these struggles? How do we seek to reduce the impact of the built environment on the natural world, and simultaneously, the impact of a seemingly angry natural environment on our structures? How do we enhance community, build economic opportunity and, in short, make life better for all our futures? These are weighty issues that challenge the most experienced of us. We have greater knowledge, and greater technical ability to address the problems facing us, but little has changed in our approach to homebuilding. This lies at the core of the task presented to architectural students in a competition sponsored by AIA CRAN in conjunction with the ACSA (Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture) for the 2016 to 2017 school year.

Titled "HERE+NOW: A House for the 21st Century," the competition asked students to design a house that is "informed by context, culture, and vernacular, but fully embracing 21st century technology and ideas of domesticity." The design, it stated, should reflect "an innovative, creative, environmentally responsible, and culturally sensitive approach to issues of domesticity." Simple.

The broad scope of this design challenge was furthered by an open program: "There is no maximum or minimum square footage requirement for any program area or the combined programs of the house. Students are encouraged to explore creative/innovative approaches to programmatic arrangement and distribution. Space allocation should be appropriate to the design proposal and the needs of the client." A few basic parameters were established—enough to define the project as a house: sleeping areas (not so limiting a name as "bedrooms"), at least one bathroom, a kitchen, living area, etc. As for site, any site would do, real or imagined, but the par-

Images: Courtesy Prairie View A&M University

Left: Students from Prairie View A&M University reimagined an infill lot as a duplex in The Dog Trot Duo presentation.

ticipants had to identify the site as being within one of the six different climate zones identified in the International Energy Conservation Code. Further, the site had to be labeled as either urban, suburban, or rural.

In essence, the participants were asked to establish their own problem, site, and location, and then solve for it. Like a blank canvas before an artist, or a blank piece of paper in front of a writer, this is a potentially daunting task in its apparent simplicity.

Students were asked, whether in teams or alone, to work with a faculty advisor toward their goal. Despite its difficult and lofty goals —or, perhaps, because of them—the competition drew in excess of 560 participants from more than 50 schools.

Jurors for the project were: Aaron Bowman from Liollio Architecture in Charleston, S.C.; Patricia Seitz of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston; and Emily Roush-Elliott of Delta Design Build Workshop in Greenwood, Miss. The text in the project program identified the range of issues facing the participants and by which the jurors would consider the entries for either a one- or two-family dwelling:

> Consideration should be given to the relationship between interior and exterior spaces of the home and what role (if any) exterior space should play in the design of the home. Transportation and connectivity should be addressed as an integral component of the overall design strategy. Appropriate space should be allocated for issues such as vehicle parking (bike/car / other) where required.
>
> Design proposals should reflect a clear conceptual strategy which is resolved in built form at a detailed level. There are no restrictions or limitations in the use of materials or building systems. However, projects should be developed with an integrated approach to materials and systems and should reflect an understanding of the characteristics, advantages, and limitations of the materials selected. CRAN is committed to promoting the value of design irrespective of style. Residential architects tend to work in a variety of styles based on input from clients, local building traditions, and regulatory requirements. As in professional practice, design proposals should responsibly address the needs of the client, context, climate, and culture of the area. Design proposals should be informed by historic precedent, but should represent contemporary ideas of domesticity and building science. Through renderings and elevations, the proposals should demonstrate qualities such as materials, texture, and color. Equal consideration should be given to the arrangement and articulation of exterior form and interior spaces.
>
> Submissions must clearly address the requirements of the program. In addressing the specific issues of the design challenge, submissions must demonstrate the proposal's response to the following requirements:
>
> - A strong conceptual strategy resolved in a coherent, integrated design proposal
> - An understanding of the physical characteristics of the site and the local climate
> - A compelling response to the physical, emotional, and cultural needs of the inhabitants
> - A clear understanding and resolution of tectonic issues
> - An informed position on vernacular and historic precedent

Another consideration, not an afterthought by any means, was to be the client. While participants could essentially design their own client, they were required to provide a client selection and description as well as the rationale for that

choice. It is typically difficult to mimic the effect of a client on a project when outlining a competition program. The client, to the practicing architect, is the dynamic that often changes and most strongly influences the direction of the design solution. Most often the client, in such programs, is a static character defined by a laundry list of quantified wants to be satisfied. This program sought to give the students more reason to consider the client as real with needs reaching beyond the program specifics.

From the submissions, the jurors selected first, second, and third place winners along with four honorable mentions. The winners are:

First Place: ***Upper Squamish Research and Residence***
Student: Jesse Bird
Faculty Sponsor: Sheryl Boyle
School: Carleton University

Second Place: ***The Dogtrot Duo***
Students: Shannen Martin, Sean Benson, Jabbar Cobbs, Kimberly Montgomery, & Emanuel Soito
Faculty Sponsor: Michelle Pottorf
School: Prairie View A&M University

Third Place: ***Common Ground: Collective Living in Seattle, WA***
Student: Ariel Scholten
Faculty Sponsors: Elizabeth Golden & Richard Mohler
School: University of Washington

Honorable Mention: ***The Battery House***
Students: Homa Ansari, Anmol Kollegal, & Timothy Massa
Faculty Sponsor: Zui Ng
School: University of Houston

Honorable Mention: ***Affordable Housing for the 21st Century: A Housing Solution for Poverty in the Neglected Mississippi Delta***
Student: Zachary Henry
Faculty Sponsor: Emily M. McGlohn
School: Mississippi State University

Honorable Mention: ***Sliding Canvas House: Transitional Home***
Student: Samantha Geibel
Faculty Sponsor: Taiji Miyasaka
School: Washington State University

Honorable Mention: ***Revitalizing the Rural***
Student: Jacob Eble
Faculty Sponsor: Mark Stephen Taylor
School: University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Images: Courtesy University of Washington

Top and above: Students from the University of Washington took on Seattle's housing crisis with a proposal for a cohousing complex.

Well over three quarters of a million new homes are completed each year in this country. Most of these, as the competition text notes, are designed and built speculatively, devoid of specific client needs and independent of context. A smaller portion are designed by custom residential architects in conjunction with their clients. While each custom architect, designing one house for one client, one at a time, has less of a direct influence over the speculative housing market, our influence can still be a force for improving design rigor. New ideas, good ideas, are typically adopted and adapted and spread throughout the industry to benefit the many. There are plentiful avenues to allow these ideas to reach and influence the masses. Awards and competitions such as this are key among them.

More details can be found at:

The competition outline:
http://www.acsa-arch.org/programs-events/competitions/competition-archives/2016-2017-housing-competition

The press release of the winners:
http://www.acsa-arch.org/programs-events/competitions/competition-archives/2016-2017-housing-competition/winners

The winning student, Jesse Bird, and his faculty sponsor, Sheryl Boyle, were to attend and be recognized at the CRAN Symposium in Miami. Unfortunately, that couldn't happen. The winning boards will be on display at AIA'18 in New York this June . . . . weather permitting.—*Blake H. Held, AIA*

A Beacon on the Flat

The first new house in 50 years in Boston's historic Beacon Hill neighborhood is a meticulous reinvention.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY

ARCHITECT: HACIN + ASSOCIATES
BUILDER: HOLLAND COMPANIES
LOCATION: BOSTON

There's history, and then there's *history.* As a relatively young country, our architectural legacy doesn't have a long tail—at least when it comes to our urban dwellings. Many of our loveliest older buildings were felled before preservation-minded folks put protections in place. These days, we're better at saving our historic neighborhoods, and that's largely a good thing. But sometimes an old building really does need replacement—if it's functionally obsolescent and architecturally and historically undistinguished, or its condition is irretrievable. All were true for the previous house on this site in Boston's storied Beacon Hill neighborhood.

The area has held landmark status since the mid-1960s, and a historic review board asserted dominion over the neighborhood a good 10 years prior to that. Great timing, because that era was especially hard on significant old buildings across the country. "Progress" was often accompanied by the wrecking ball. Architect David Hacin, FAIA, loves progress as much as the next architect and his firm has done its share of contemporary work, but he is especially adept at the kind of contextual work that honors the past while moving the design conversation forward at the same time. It was for just this reason that the clients for this project—the first new house to be built in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood in 50 years—came to David.


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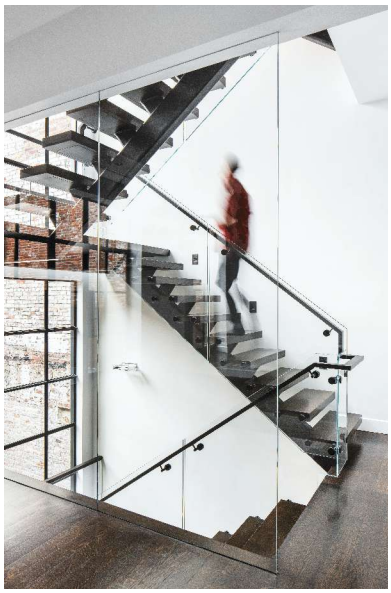
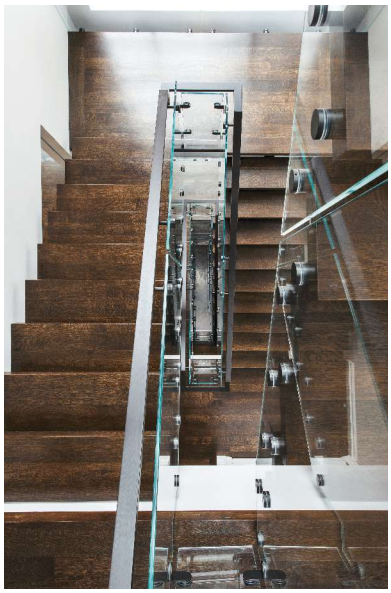




Left to right: Height restrictions limited the amount of square footage for the townhouse, so David placed a portion of the family space under the rear courtyard. Skylights and a glass-enclosed stair bring natural light to those spaces.

They had originally bought the house presuming its terrible condition would permit them to tear it down and replace it with no issue. They hired Holland Companies, an esteemed design/build/development firm, to help guide them. Although the company has a licensed architect on staff and is known for its historic work, it soon became apparent that they were going to need an even deeper bench to get the project through the approval process. That's when the clients tapped David, who has a winning track record with historic commissions and award juries, to lead the effort. In fact, he had recently finished another Beacon Hill project that was lauded as "thoughtful and sensitive."

David recalls, "They had gone to the neighborhood and the historic commission with a generic design for a Beacon Hill townhouse and a faux carriage house addition to serve as the garage. That basically created a World War III situation. The plan was attacked from all sides."

The original house was located in the "Flat," the zone off the hill and across Charles Street that once served the mansions, says David. "The Flat was built on fill and had stables and servants' quarters, until it took off and then some very nice homes were built. So, there is a wide variety there—utilitarian buildings and then some nice houses. Some of those houses have garages because of carriage houses."

The house was thought to have derived from a stable built in 1890 and converted to a house in the 1920s. It was, says David, "a very strange hodgepodge of things that had been built over time, and the whole thing was in a very derelict state."

Once retained, David launched the endeavor with some hard truths. "The first thing I said to the clients was, 'You're never going to get this garage.'" The lack of a garage is less of an issue for many of David's urban clients these days, especially when they live in such walkable neighborhoods as Beacon Hill—after all, the iconic bar from Cheers is just a stone's throw away. "Many people who live here go down from two cars to one. It's definitely a trend. I had clients who moved to Beacon Hill from Paris, in part because the area was so walkable. They don't have a car."

One of the clients on this project is also a developer, however, so although this was his primary residence, future

Above: The formal living area is detailed with millwork befitting a historic house—the crisp edges modernize the look. The paneled wall conceals plenty of storage.

Top and above: Large-format parquet flooring updates a classic look in the family kitchen. The materials palette is conservative and timeless—cocoa-stained white oak floors and cabinetry, Calacatta marble, white cabinets, and stainless steel.

resale and marketability were concerns. Still, he and his wife acquiesced and that opened up more possibilities for David's team to design a commodious home.

To get the plans through the review board, it was important to understand what the old building contributed to the neighborhood. "The Boston Preservation Alliance had come out against demolition," says the architect. "They were most concerned about the idea that this would set a precedent, so there was a ton of scrutiny on the project. We had to bring in three structural engineers and do three separate reports to prove the existing house was not in salvageable condition."

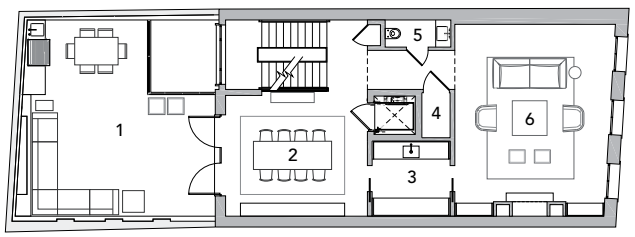
Once the city agreed to condemn the building, clients and architect had to win approval of the design for its replacement. "What people liked about the existing building was that it was eclectic," says David. "It had a big central window and a series of smaller windows that broke up the repetitive rhythms of the street. We took cues from the old building and incorporated them into the new design."

Stair Contest

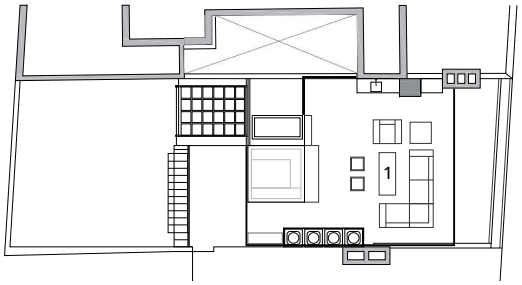
The clients' initial design for the new house was a "classic townhouse with a central stair." David's plan was to "push the stair to the side and bring in lots of light. We did something similar a few years ago on another house on the hill that was dark. What we do is a computer model light study to make sure the light penetration will be as meaningful as we think it will. We wanted to do a glass-and-open-riser stair, but the clients thought it might make them feel uncomfortable. So, the treads are very solid, but the way the stair comes up is pulled away from the wall and railing.

"Once we made the decision to move the staircase back, it became the central organizing element," David continues. Wrapped in glass and steel with a skylight at the top, the stair is visible only from the courtyard at the back of the house, an area safe from the purview of the review board. "With no alleys in the back of these buildings, the struggle is always in bringing light in."

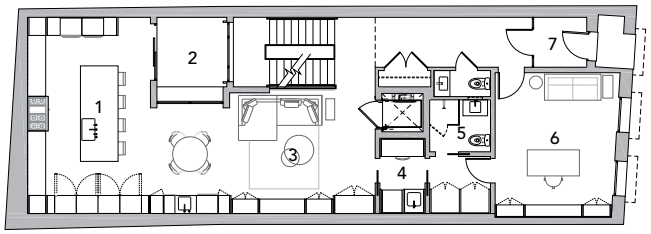
Top and above: A strategic skylight illuminates key work areas in the subterranean kitchen. Light-color surfaces also brighten the space.



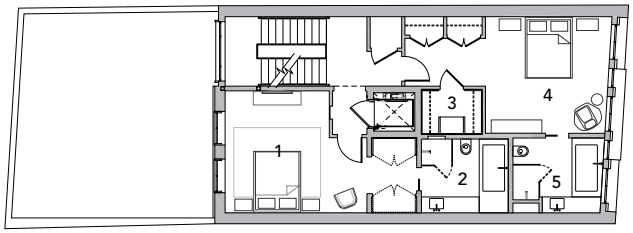
SECOND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Dining Terrace | 2. Dining Room
3. Catering Kitchen | 4. Closet | 5. Powder Room | 6. Living Room



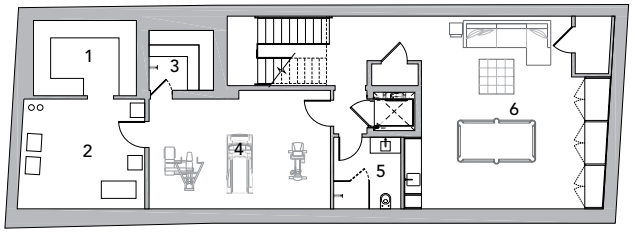
ROOF TERRACE PLAN | 1. Roof Deck



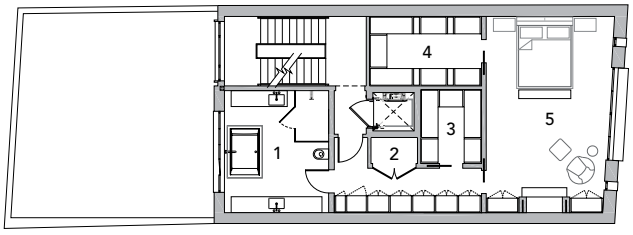
FIRST FLOOR PLAN | 1. Kitchen | 2. Garden | 3. Family Room
4. Laundry Room | 5. Bathroom | 6. Study | 7. Entry



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN | 1. Bedroom | 2. Bathroom | 3. Closet
4. Bedroom | 5. Bathroom



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN | 1. Closet | 2. Storage | 3. Steam Room
4. Exercise Room | 5. Bathroom | 6. Game Room



THIRD FLOOR PLAN | 1. Master Bathroom | 2. Master Closet
3. Dressing Closet | 4. Dressing Closet | 5. Master Bedroom

Top and above: Carefully detailed fireplace surrounds in the master bedroom and living room elevate their prefab inserts. The steel windows are correct for the neighborhood.

The new rear courtyard addresses some of that—the original house had extended all the way to the back of the lot. The footprint of the outdoor space is now "nearly the same size as the house," says David. Standing in the courtyard, you can see the traces of paint left by the old house on neighboring walls—a kind of pentimento of the original.

To recapture some of the square footage lost to the courtyard, David tucked the family quarters under the patio, and carved a skylight out of the pavers for natural light. "We raised the courtyard up a floor, and placed the formal main living room and dining room on the second floor," he explains. The formal level serves as *piano nobile*, accessed by the grand glass stair.

There's also a basement level with storage, exercise room, and a family gaming space. The first floor has a large kitchen, informal dining room, family room, and study.

Right: Another skylight in a secondary bath ushers natural light down from the roof. Here, application of the boldly veined Calacatta marble is unrestrained.

The formal level comprises a catering kitchen, living room, dining room, and access to the courtyard. The third floor is devoted entirely to the master suite, and the fourth floor holds two bedrooms, each with its own bathroom. A roof deck tops it all off. In addition to the stair, an elevator provides easy access to all but the roof level.

"We're seeing it a lot throughout Boston that people really do want to age in place, so an elevator becomes very important," says David. "It goes up to the top floor, but we couldn't take it all the way to the roof deck, because we would've had to have a head house for it."

As it turns out, the historic commission did have jurisdiction over a part of the roofline in the rear of the building. "That's the reason we have the copper dormer in the back—the right half of the top floor was subject to the commission."

Interior Monologue

The interior palette is a dance of dark and light. The floors and some cabinets are cocoa-stained white oak. The large-format parquet design of the flooring harkens to the past, but its beefed-up scale freshens the look.

In the family kitchen and elsewhere, white is the broad-stroke color, with accents coming from the bold veining in the Calacatta marble, and the glass and steel of windows and stair.

Steel windows were allowable per the historic commission. "There was precedent for steel windows," says David. "The trouble with wood windows is they have to be true divided light and they have to meet energy code."

Construction of any new building in Boston must meet LEED standards, but David was precluded by the historic commission from installing solar panels, and the "delicate soils" of the old fill would not permit a geothermal system. The glass stair, however, gave the building credit for natural lighting, and the lack of a garage worked in its favor as well.

In the formal living room, the palette adds black to the color mix—in the windows, of course, but also in the fireplace surround. The articulated absolute black granite suggests the traditional detailing of a period surround, but is executed in a modern, minimalist way. The wall behind it evokes the millwork of another era, but is actually a series of built-in cabinets for storage and audio/video equipment.

> "I'm very concerned about quality, and I want our legacy to be as good as anything else in the neighborhood."
>
> —David Hacin

The master bedroom has a similarly pared down fireplace surround, done in marble instead of granite. The master bath is swathed in the same Calacatta as the kitchen, with respite for the eyes found in the all-white floor tiles, white vanities, and monochrome vessel tub.

An upper-floor bathroom goes a little wilder with the marble—it's on the walls, tub surround, floor, and counter. Above the vanity, a skylight brings soothing natural light down from the roof.

Everything is tasteful and timeless.

Clockwise from the left: The master bath balances Calacatta marble surfaces with clean, white elements, such as the vessel tub , floor tile, and cabinetry. The calm, spa-like space is an antidote to the hodgepodge assembly of Beacon Hill rooftops beyond.

Left: The courtyard view shows a townhouse poised between past and present. Adjacent walls reveal points of adhesion with the former structure.

Another Brick in the Wall

It's not so cool these days to build with brick. Perhaps we can blame the building boom legacy of brick-front, vinyl-sided houses that blotted the suburban landscape in the last millennium. Done well, however, brick is as ageless as that white marble, and just as durable. Here on Beacon Hill, it's nearly *de rigueur*. The previous house was clad in brick, so there was no question that its replacement should be clad in the same material.

Until you build with brick, it's a shock to learn how many shades, textures, and other variations a single material can have—not unlike marble, granite, and wood. So, choosing the brick was David's first challenge on the building's exterior.

"What I liked about what was there before was that the brick was a slightly different color from the adjacent buildings," he explains. "It separated the façades and created a kind of picture frame for the building," he says. Filling in the picture frame is an assortment of period-evocative materials, such as copper, wrought iron, steel, glass, and a protective granite skirt at the sidewalk edge.

Pulling from that set of playing pieces, articulation of the front façade was a game of inches. "What a lot of people don't like about new buildings is that they appear very thin," he explains. "You could use all of these materials, but if you treat them in a thin way, it doesn't fall into the character of the street. There are shadows cast by the dimensions of the brick—the demi-lunes carved out of the façade next door, for instance.

"So we played up the details and pictured-framed all of the openings. We created soldier coursing. We added an atelier window—something we've seen around the hill—and flanked it with smaller-than-typical windows. This helps anchor the building into the morphology of the street. Then, we have this punctuation mark in the center of the building made three-dimensional by the copper planter. We pulled out the French balconies and the planter to make the façade more plastic. Instead of brick above the window with the planter, we cut into the façade with copper. And on the top story, we have the AB, AB rhythms of the columns.

"The goal was to get as much dimension in 18 inches of depth as we could," he says. "We had to make sure our building wasn't flat."

The original building had arched windows, so you can be assured there was much discussion by the historic commission about whether to allow the architect's right-angle approach to fenestration. David is good humored about such arguments, and increasingly tolerant of bending modernist credo in favor of contextual modesty.

"You hear a lot of architects say, 'oh, no, not another building in brick.' But you know, brick lets us do timeless projects," he explains. "We have fantastic old-world masons in Boston, and this building is going to be around a lot longer than I will.

"I'm very concerned about quality," he adds. "And I want our legacy to be as good as anything else in the neighborhood. Over the years, I've become even more committed to projects that really are of their place and not generic."

That's a good neighbor policy that goes a long way in places like Boston's Beacon Hill. History isn't just a matter of what was built in the past, it's what you lay as groundwork for the future. RD

Chestnut Street Townhouse

BOSTON

ARCHITECT: David J. Hacin, FAIA, principal in charge; Jeremy Robertson, senior architectural designer, Hacin + Associates, Boston

BUILDER: Joe Holland, The Holland Companies, Boston

PROJECT SIZE: 5,104 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1,746 square feet

PHOTOGRAPHY: Bob O'Connor Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

BRICK CLADDING: BrickCraft 'Harvard' (modular)

STONE BASE: Impala granite (flame finish)

SILLS: Brownstone (lightly rocked finish)

STONE PAVERS: Delgado granite (flame finish)

METAL CLADDING: Red copper (flat and standing seams)

WINDOWS/EXTERIOR DOORS: Hope's Landmark175 Series true divided lite (Rodin Patina satin finish)

JULIET BALCONY RAILINGS: Custom modification of original decorative railings

MOTORIZED SKYLIGHT HATCH: Rollamatic Roofs

WALKABLE SKYLIGHTS: Atlantech Systems

GAS FIREPLACES: Montigo (H-Series)

WOOD FLOORING: Rift-sawn solid white oak (5" wide plank, custom stain)

APPLIANCES: Sub-Zero, Wolf, Bosch

KITCHEN/BATH STONE: Calacatta marble

MASTER TUB: MTI 'Andrea'

MASTER TUB FILLER: Lefroy Brooks Kafka

City Houses

Standing out and fitting in, the best urban dwellings do a little of both.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY AND CHERYL WEBER

Chicago Residence

BOOTH HANSEN
CHICAGO

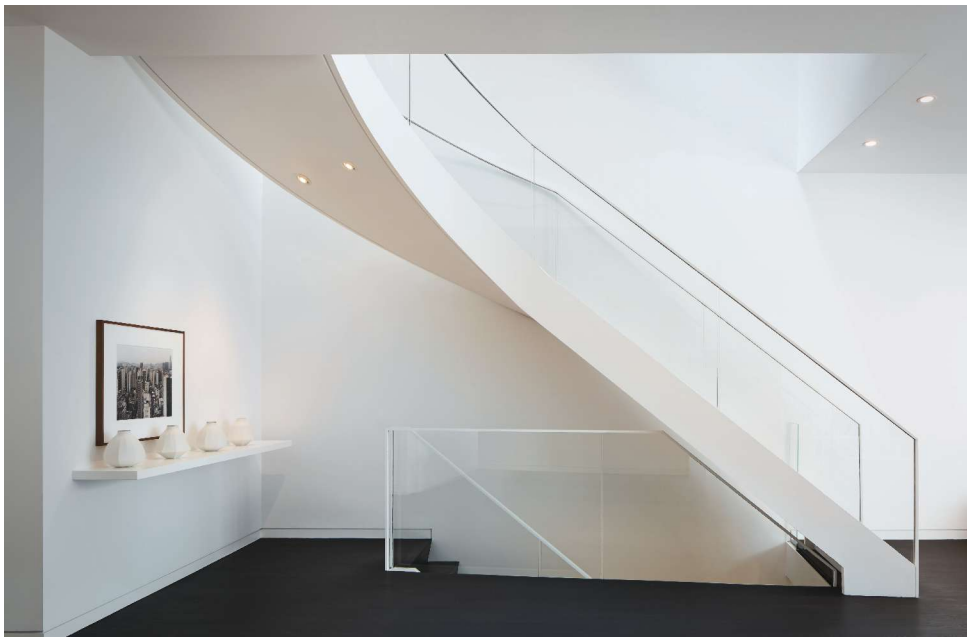
As a residential professional, one of the most intimidating kinds of projects is renovating the work of a distinguished architect. That's the challenge Larry Booth undertook for this award-winning urban project in Chicago. The punchline is, the distinguished architect responsible for the existing 1980s-era house was Laurence Booth, FAIA—the man in the mirror. He returned—nearly 40 years later—to update and improve upon his own work.

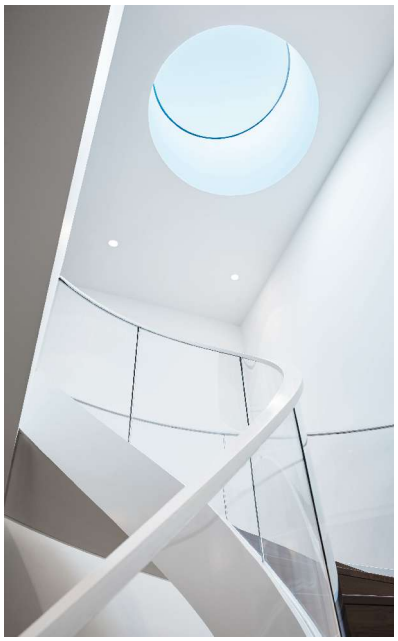
Perhaps the passage of so much time was a kind of blessing. Says Larry, "It was done so long ago, I really had no sense of ownership of the original." This was one of those projects that starts as a small job, but then grows and grows until no portion is left untouched. So, had Larry felt possessive of his first go-round, it would have proved problematic, indeed. "The concept is still basically the same, but nearly everything is improved in design and execution. The detailing is more sophisticated after 30 years have gone by. The tech is much improved in what it enabled us to do. And the clients were more generous in their ambitions."

Larry's revision was sharpened by the progress of design thinking during the intervening years, of course, but also by the collaboration with his project architect on the house, principal Alex Schabel, AIA. The house, at least from the outside, was very familiar to Alex, who lives just a block or so away. "I'd see it on my walks and think how cool it is," she says.

Opposite and above: The distinctive glass wall on the front elevation brings natural light inside, but places living areas at a comfortable remove from street-level passersby.

Above and right: Updates to the house focused on paring down and curating design elements. Even the fireplace surround all but disappears.





Above, left to right: The location and curve of the stair were original, but the renovation sharpened nearly everything else about it, including the railings and the glass for the stair and the skylight at the top.

"Since we were working with so few materials, we tried to separate them and give them air."

—Alex Schabel

The current owners fell in love with the house for its contemporary feel and for its abundance of light, but they saw room for improvement in how it served their family. They didn't care for the kitchen or bathrooms, and they didn't need all the bedrooms Larry had designed for the original couple's multiple children. Paring down the program meant the design team could also enhance the flow of natural light and circulation. "We started with the idea of just surgical interventions," says Alex. "The parti is essentially the same and the house was originally pretty stripped down inside, but the clients are real minimalists—like nothing-on-the-coffee-table people. So we ended up doing a very strict editing job. Everything was considered and curated."

Same Difference

The team's big bold move on the revised house was to enlarge the east-facing glass façade from one story to two. "We made it taller and stretched it up, and we enlarged the window above," says Alex. "The house is in a historic district but does not have historic designation. It always stood out, so we weren't going to cause a big stir with that change. In fact, it's now more in proportion with the neighborhood. That was something Larry was excited to be able to do."

"It's now more vertically commanding on the street," says Larry. "And the transparency of the glass further complements the solidity of the stone." Both Larry and Alex agree that advancements in glazing technology made the changes possible. "The curtain wall

Above and left: In the kitchen, extensive storage walls keep everything out of sight when the cooking is done. Only the rear patio invites attention, a lively jumble of greenery beyond the peacefully static interiors. Come wintertime, the patio transforms into a snowy companion of the kitchen's pristine palette.

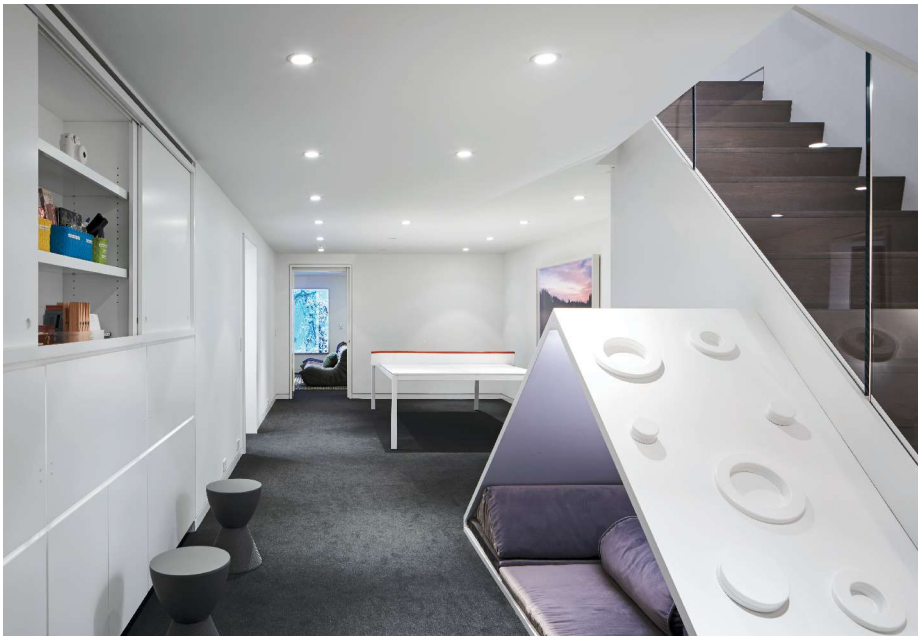
is custom made and structurally glazed to eliminate mullions on the outside. It's a high-performance unit that's also low-E," says Alex.

Despite the transparency of the façade, the interiors retain a measure of privacy. The main floor is elevated above the street, and a partial storage wall divides the entrance vestibule from the main living area. The tile floor in the vestibule is warmed by radiant heat (a welcome feature for Chicago winters), and there are operable windows here and there to ventilate in milder weather.

The second biggest move was to relocate the kitchen from the middle of the main floor to the rear of the house, capturing natural light for a critical family space. "Now you look right through the living room to the kitchen and out to the garden space," Alex explains. A verdant little tiered patio, it gives the owners a refuge in nature. Having come from a high-rise building with no outdoor space, seeing green from end to end in their new house is a seasonal delight.

Perhaps no space in the project was more "curated" than the kitchen. The clients had collected a great quantity of marble for the project, intended chiefly for the kitchen and the master bathroom. "Everything was about that marble," Alex says. "The kitchen island is some 12 feet long. Overall, they wanted a very clean look and a place to put everything away. They cook, and do a lot of snacking, baking, and homework there. Then things can be put away in the custom lacquered cabinets. The room looks especially pretty when there's snow outside."

You know the palette is really minimalist when the pizzazz comes from the veining in the marble and the shadow line created by the island's reveal. Reveals continue throughout the house, adding just enough break in surfaces to elevate the sparse detailing.



Top and above: Runaway spaces are the greatest luxuries in urban townhouses. A former sunroom off the master is now a relaxing sitting room. And in the basement game room, built-ins conceal fold-down work tables for crafts. In the media room at the rear, an illuminated art piece feigns a window view.

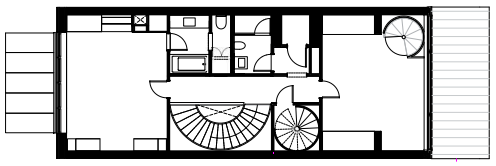
Top and above: Book matching and mirroring the marble pattern for the master bath was a Tetris-like design effort.

"Since we were working with so very few materials, we tried to separate them and give them air," says Alex. "It was very tricky to get the old and the new to match up and look intentional."

You see those reveals in the base trim and in the new undulating main stair, among other locations. The stair evokes the curves of the original, but the glass is new and the railings have been flattened and squared off, as compared to the 1980s ship rail used before—just a few more examples of how every touchpoint was reconsidered for today's aesthetic.

Although some variation of the main stair was sure to stay, the spiral back stair was on the chopping block at the beginning of the project. In the existing house, it accessed a series of sunrooms and quasi-outdoor spaces—areas that were vulnerable to heat gain from their western exposure. Ultimately, the owners and team decided to retain the stair as a "cool remnant of the original house," Alex recalls. Those rear rooms were repurposed as resolutely interior space—a sitting room for the second-floor master and a playroom for the top-floor child's realm (the footprint gets smaller as you go up). Meanwhile, the architects pulled the roof line out a bit to create a little more shade and protection from the sun, and all the glazing

FLOOR PLAN



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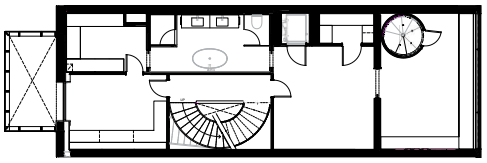

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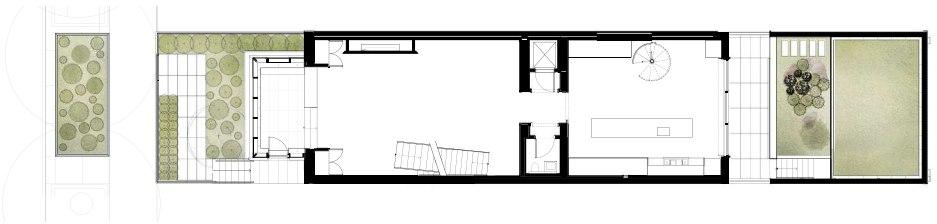

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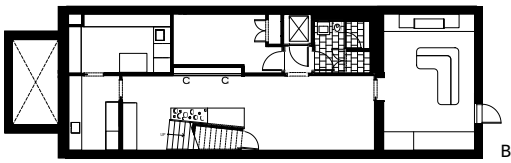
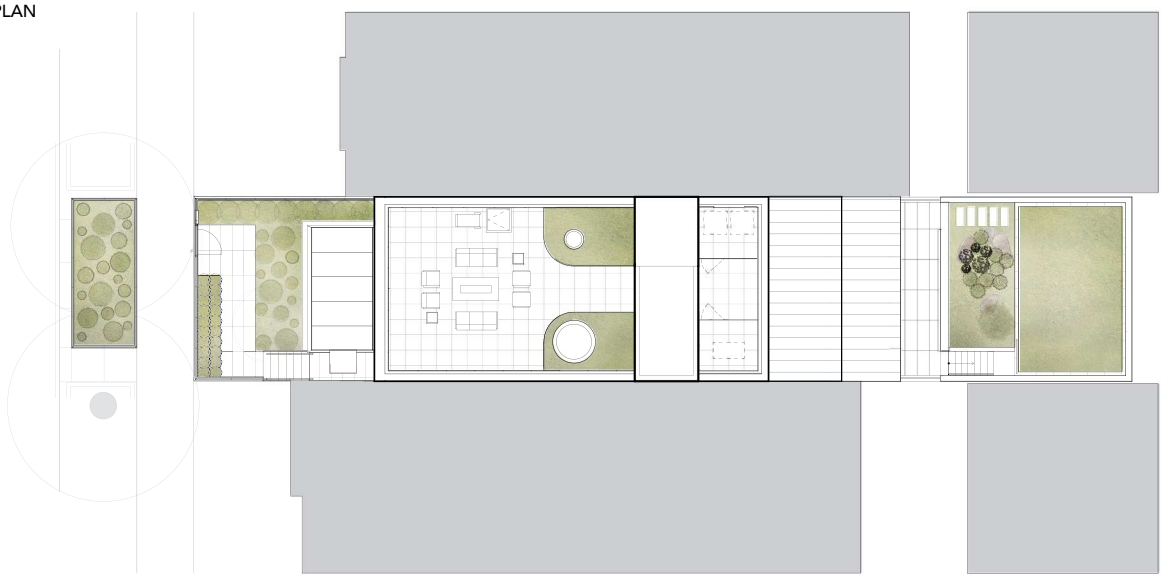
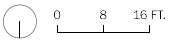


BASEMENT

SITE PLAN





was redesigned and replaced with more energy-efficient specimens.

The master bath showcases more of the owners' marble slabs, each piece carefully placed to highlight the patterns created by the veining. Behind the vessel tub, a giant X aligns its sinews along the rise of the tub filler. The result looks effortless, but of course the room required some of the most intense work in the project. "We photographed every slab so we could work with the photos to lay out the design," says Alex. "It all starts with the X pattern behind the tub. There's another X on the floor. The slabs all book match and mirror. It took 30 or 40 tubs to pick out the right one. The stone setters did an amazing job."

Ups and Downs

Although the renovation pared some rooms on the interior, it added a stunning rooftop deck. The new elevator makes it truly feasible to use as an entertaining area or simply a place to grill burgers *en famille*. Because the neighborhood is a landmark historic district and many of the surrounding buildings are not tall, the vistas are wonderfully expansive.

True, the house was not a landmark building, but it still came under scrutiny by the review board, which was especially concerned about the building's height as it appeared from the street. "The roof was flat and the limestone parapet was original, but we added the custom glass and zinc coping and railing," says Alex. (Both disappear at street level.) Zinc also clads the "portal" volume that houses the elevator and stair access. The roof is

Above: The historic neighborhood's height restrictions protect an uninterrupted vista of Chicago's skyline. Oculus skylights bring natural light down through the interiors and the main stair.

floored in porcelain pavers. The oculus skylights were original, but the architects swapped out their acrylic covering for low-E glass with better performance and clarity. The largest one illuminates the main stair, bringing natural light in through the center of the house.

Last but not least, an informal family area occupies the lowest level. More built-ins keep things just as tidy as elsewhere in the house, with several sections flipping down into work tables for crafts and other activities. At the back is a media room that terminates in a work of art—a gel-lit depiction of cherry blossoms that remain forever in bloom.

"When we first built this house, people were still leaving the city for the suburbs," Larry recalls. "You can live a lot better in the city these days—all you need is a little bit of nature."
–*S.C.C.*

Private Residence

Chicago

ARCHITECT: Larry Booth, FAIA, principal-in-charge; Alex Schabel, AIA, project architect, Shirin Reklaoui, associate, BOOTH HANSEN, Chicago

BUILDER: Howard Dardick, TipTop Builders inc., Skokie, Ill.

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Diane Zabich, Diane Zabich Architecture and Interiors, LLC, Evanston, Ill.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Doug Hoerr, Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects, Chicago

PROJECT SIZE: 8,000 square feet (approx.)

SITE SIZE: .07 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Dave Burk, Dave Burk Photography

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS: Marvin

WINDOW WALLS/SYSTEMS: Fleetwood

CURTAIN WALL: Rareform Architectural Products, LLC

CLADDING: VMZinc

DRYWALL: USG

ROOFING MATERIALS: Sika Sarnafil, Grace Ice & Water Shield

RADIANT HEATING: Nuheat

FIREPLACE: European Home

COOKTOP: Wolf

VENT HOOD: Bosch

WALL OVENS/STEAM OVEN/ DISHWASHER: Miele

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

WASHER/DRYER: LG

GRILL: Viking

KITCHEN/MASTER BATH FAUCETS: Dornbracht

KITCHEN SINK: Blanco

OTHER FAUCETS/SHOWER HEADS: Grohe, Hansgrohe

MASTER TUB: Hydrology

OTHER TUBS: Duravit

MASTER SINK/OTHER SINKS: Lacava

EXTEROR LIGHTING: Bega

INTERIOR LIGHTING: Philips Lightolier, Acolyte, Robern

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

EXTERIOR PAINTS/COATINGS: Sto Corp

INTERIOR PAINTS: Benjamin Moore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Crescent Drive Residence

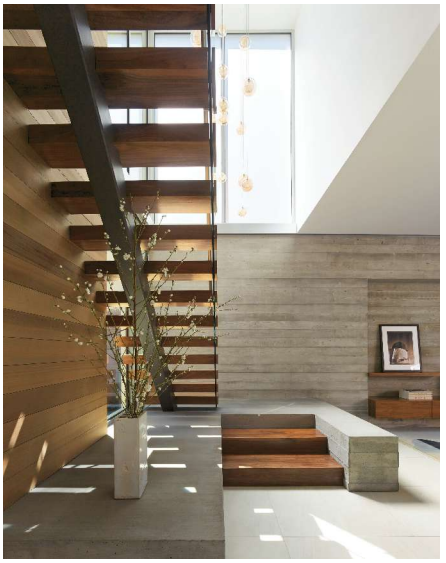
BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF.
EHRLICH YANAI RHEE CHANEY ARCHITECTS

On a tight urban lot, the design of a home's entryway goes far beyond conventional notions of curb appeal. It's not just about turning a friendly face to the street, but also creating privacy—a little distance between the front door and the sidewalk. Known for their simple compositions and Japanese aesthetic, EYRC Architects designed an entry sequence for this Beverly Hills residence that is deeply satisfying on both counts. But it's not just the transition from outside to inside, public to private that feels calming and gracious. The entire house is designed for movement, rest, views, and reflection.

"The young couple wanted a house that made sense for the two of them, or four of them in the future, and that would provide a great environment for entertaining," says partner Takashi Yanai, FAIA. "And privacy was very important to them."

Located within easy walking distance of shops and restaurants, the house's exterior is comparable in scale and materials to its neighboring 1940s Spanish-style homes, but with a modern twist. The architects used interlocking geometries of stucco, board-formed concrete, and cedar siding to produce something both contemporary and warm for this urban oasis. Slightly L-shaped, its front volume is offset to

Above: The front entry is pulled back from the street and into a small courtyard, creating a peaceful procession from public to private space.



Clockwise from opposite page: The L-shaped façade is offset to optimize outdoor spaces. Board-formed concrete, cedar, glass, and steel were the big splurges for the feature wall and stair. A flex space off the main entry relieves some burden from the main living area. The stair plinth provides display space for decorative objects; the stair treads are walnut on a single steel stringer.

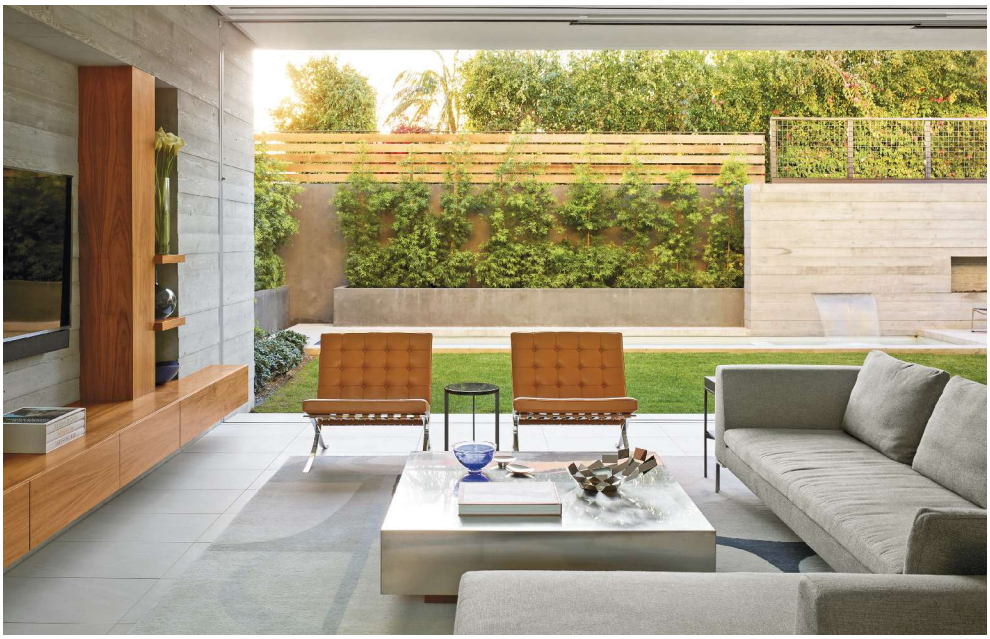
make room for a gated main entrance through the south-facing side yard containing a small pool and fountain.

"The gate leads you into this pastoral courtyard, and you encounter the front door once you're in that courtyard," says Yanai. "It was a way to layer in openness to nature and light but maintain privacy from the street. The exterior experience extends far deeper into the site than if you just had a big box."

Nearly every design decision was focused on creating the illusion of continuity between interior and exterior. Inside, the foyer faces a flex room—a combination TV/music/guest lounge—that can be pocketed off. Its glass exterior wall brings in light and views of a contemplative side garden. "We're not throwing away the side yard, even if it's just 4 or 5 feet wide," Yanai says. Turn 90 degrees to the left, and you're facing the main living area, where several exquisitely executed moves elevate it to the realm of art. One is the board-formed concrete—first encountered in the entry courtyard—that creates an elegant, three-step platform at the base of the stairs. It turns back, letting one experience the space from different directions, before wrapping across the entire south wall and shooting out into the backyard.

"It's a feature wall where we concentrated the finances and energy of the project," Yanai says. Inset with maple casework, it borrows the Japanese concept of *tokonoma*, or display space. "In a Japanese house it's much more discreet

Above and right: The skillful choreography of just a few materials makes the small space live larger. A Weiland window wall system opens the living room to the rear courtyard and pool.



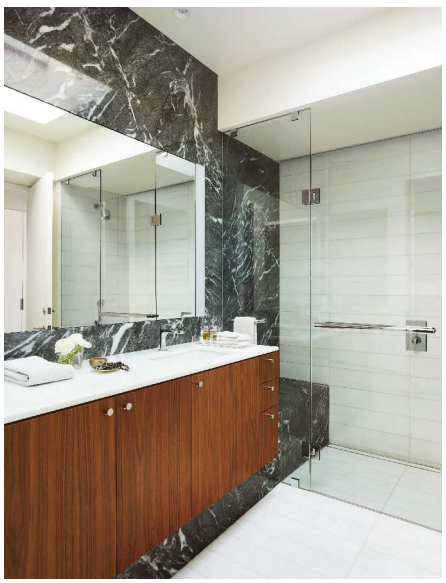
FLOOR PLAN

and small; this is a contemporary riff on that idea, where we have a wall that is beautiful unto itself, but also a composition and display of both everyday and fine art objects that make a statement about the spirit of the space."

The staircase is another object of art, as well as a key piece of interior choreography. Positioned along a two-story wall clad in cedar—another touchstone from the courtyard—its thick walnut treads rise on a single steel stringer. "The stair anchors the threshold between inside and out, but is also an event; when someone ascends or descends the stairs, they're sort of on display," says Yanai.

The living area's other defining feature is a sliding glass wall that opens seamlessly to the backyard and swimming pool. Because the lot is not very big, it's important to have this visual and literal porosity, the architect says. "You pocket that door away, and all of a sudden that sitting and dining area feels almost like it's outside, so it eliminates the need for covered outdoor space. It was a way to avoid the need for an outdoor sitting area." The backyard, in turn, reads as a natural extension of the house with its board-formed concrete fireplace wall, concrete planters, and cedar slats.

Shoehorned onto a tight lot, the home's simple, peaceful interior palette lets the landscape and art, and the lives of the owners, take center stage. In the absence of upper cabinets, the white kitchen



Above: Lush materials and contrasts add interest to the master bath.

blends with the rest of the house rather than standing out as a discrete space. Its pops of walnut—the range hood, the island—read as pieces of furniture, while the butler's pantry around the corner keeps countertop appliances out of view. Likewise, the kitchen's large-format porcelain floor tiles are low-maintenance and have an elegance that a concrete floor doesn't have, Yanai says.

Upstairs, the architects' interest in opening up strategic outdoor views continued to drive the design. The master suite in the back, two bedrooms, and the office at the front lie along a single hallway, so that there is a view of the sky and tree canopy at each end of the corridor. Here, too, the landscape is experienced in a way that lets all the interior spaces expand. "We're mindful of what you are looking at when you turn a corner or are headed down a passage or stairs," says Yanai.

If the clients are delighted with their private yet porous house, hopefully the neighbors are, too. Although not explicitly Spanish, it respects the street with its stucco and restraint. Its volumes step up toward the back of the site to preserve the neighborhood scale, and the metal garage door is painted a warm brown. "We don't do architecture for the sake of architecture," Yanai says. "Our architecture is pretty restrained, not minimal but simple."—*C.W.*

Above right: Walnut accents in the island and on the vent hood coupled with large-format porcelain floor tiles elevate the look of the kitchen area. *Right*: Another window wall opens the master bedroom to a small deck.

Crescent Drive Residence

Beverly Hills, Calif.

ARCHITECT: Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects, Culver City, Calif.

BUILDER: Denver T Dale V Construction, Westlake Village, Calif.

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Audrey Alberts Design, Los Angeles

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: GSLA Studio, Los Angeles

PROJECT SIZE: 3,600 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.14 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Matthew Millman

KEY PRODUCTS

COOKTOP/OVEN: Miele

COUNTERTOPS: Caesarstone

WINDOW WALLS: Weiland Doors

INTERIOR LIGHTING: Tech Light

KITCHEN CABINETRY: Poliform

LIGHTING CONTROLS: Lutron

MICROWAVE: Wolf

SKYLIGHTS: Bristolite

WINDOWS: Metal Window Corp.

WINDOW SHADES: MechoShade

Above: Although certainly modern in form, the house slips into the scale of the surrounding neighborhood.

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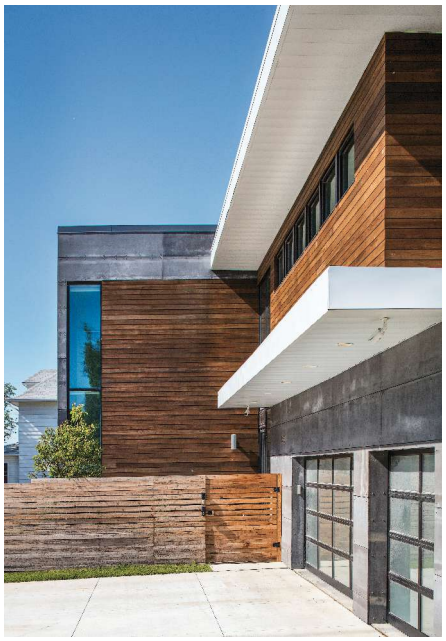
Private Residence

OMAHA, NEBRASKA
TACKARCHITECTS

With infill lots scarce and pricey in the downtown heart of cities, young buyers are searching farther afield for affordability and design freedom, scooping up single parcels in marginal urban pockets on which to build their dream home. That was the case for the clients on this project, a couple with a limited budget and a desire for something unmistakably modern. They had previously considered an empty lot in a historic Omaha neighborhood where the house had been destroyed by a tornado in the 1920s, but the landmarks commission rejected the design proposed by TACKarchitects, whom the clients had commissioned.

The couple finally found their plot in a neighborhood directly south of downtown on the residential fringe, an up-and-coming bohemia with no covenants or historic restrictions. Italian and Czech immigrants settled this area a century or so earlier, and many of the houses and light industrial buildings are in bad shape or empty now. "It gave us the opportunity to create a new prototype for residential construction, rather than something contemporaneous with the surrounding historical buildings," says TACKarchitects co-founder Jeff Dolezal, AIA.



Top and above: To push the design boundaries for their home, the clients on this project found a lot in a freewheeling fringe neighborhood.

Above, left to right: The clients had originally wanted concrete for the exterior, but fiber-cement panels were more budget friendly.

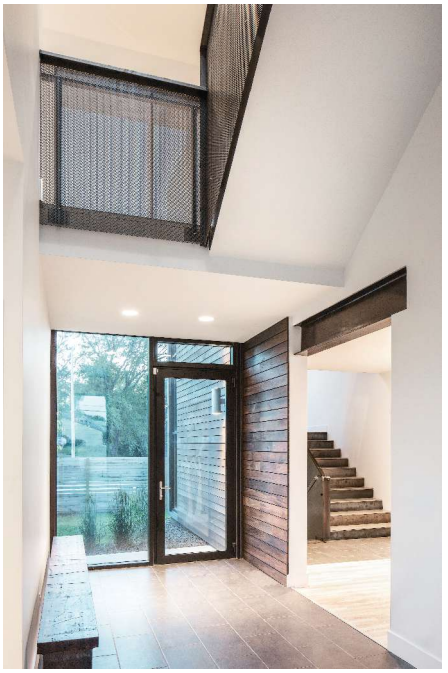
The neighborhood sits higher than Omaha's urban core, with great views of downtown to the north and west. That condition led the architects to focus the design inward on the main level, while the upstairs celebrates 200-degree views. It also dictated the home's orientation: the best views are to the north, and there was a remnant driveway on the south even though the lot was empty.

> "We set the trend for the rest of neighborhood as it started redeveloping."
>
> —Jeff Dolezal

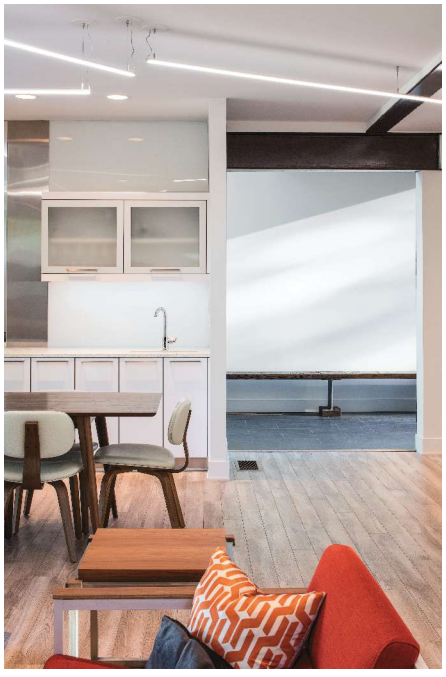
Dolezal's team organized the project into three sections. The living room, kitchen, and second-story master suite are positioned on the north, while the south side contains two children's bedrooms above a three-car garage that utilized the existing driveway. A two-story glass atrium bisects the two volumes. Its staircase leads to a second-story catwalk, then up through a roof monitor to the outdoor patio and those downtown vistas.

A rented lift provided the roof monitor's frame of reference. "We brought out a lift and went up 30 feet to where the roofline would be to see what views there were," Dolezal says. "That set the precedent for a monitor that slopes upward, with a door that exits on the south side of the house to a roof terrace." Another surprise, not as pleasant, came to light during construction. Excavation unearthed remnants of tunnels that bootleggers once used between buildings. "We had to excavate around the old bootlegger footings and add compacted fill," he says, adding that, luckily, perhaps, the discovery had no archival importance.

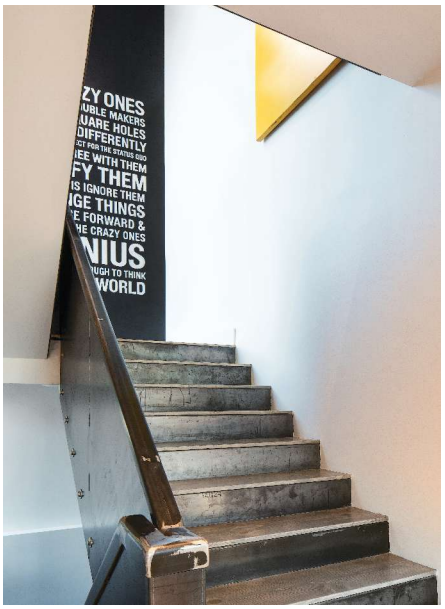
Although many nearby substandard buildings are being torn down, TACKarchitects preserved some local precedents. For example, they maintained the same setback from the street as other buildings, and the elevation of the first and second floors matches those of adjacent houses. However, the home's flat roof and materials are a stark contrast to the old neighborhood—or what is left of it. While this was the first modern house to go up in the formerly sketchy neighborhood, "now, to the south is a big multifamily development that copied

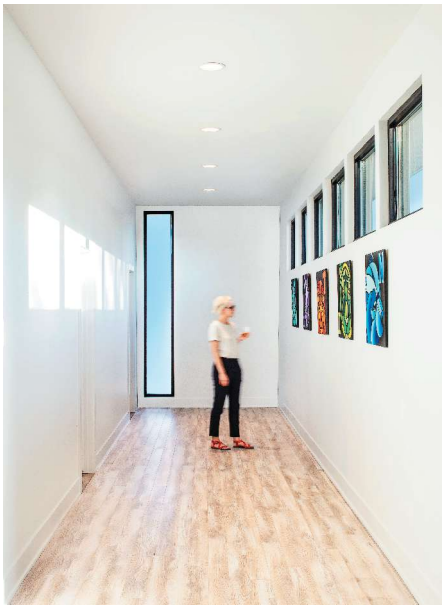


Above: Cambia in a shiplap pattern moves from outside to the entry hall interior. The perforated steel staircase was custom made by a local welder.



Clockwise from the top: On the open-plan main floor, the custom metal stair and glass-enclosed wine room are showpieces.





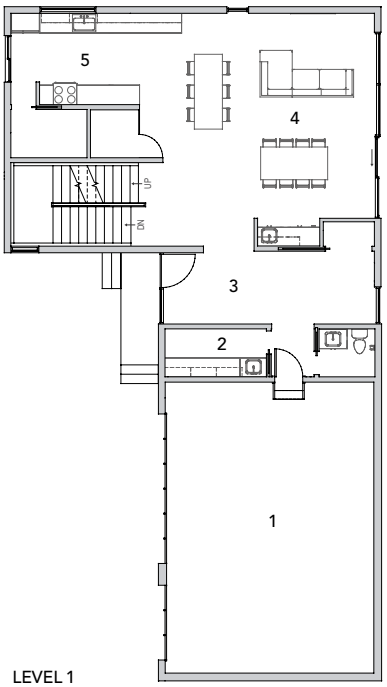
our design," Dolezal says. "We set the trend for the rest of the neighborhood as it started redeveloping."

The biggest design challenge was the budget. But by keeping the framing diagram simple and using relatively affordable materials such as pressure-treated cambia wood in a shiplap pattern, white metal on the parapets, and fiber-cement panels instead of the clients' preferred concrete, construction costs for the 4,000-square-foot house came in at around $550,000. The biggest material expense was the commercial insulated storefront windows, and the architects were judicious but generous with the use of glass.

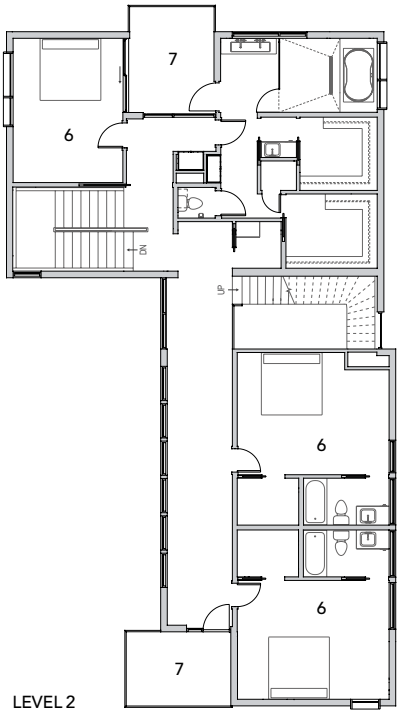
The central monitor funnels indirect light to the adjacent wings and down through the house. Visitors enter beneath the catwalk, stepping through a threshold that pops up into the two-story atrium, which houses a perforated steel staircase fabricated by a local welder. To the left is the garage, and to the right is the kitchen, dining, and living area. The roof monitor's vertical window—visible at the atrium's

Above, left to right: A bright yellow barn door closes off the master suite. The architects try to terminate all hallways with windows or art. *Below:* In the master bath, clerestory windows bring in light while maintaining privacy.

FLOOR PLAN
1. Garage
2. Mudroom
3. Entry
4. Living
5. Kitchen
6. Bedroom
7. Patio

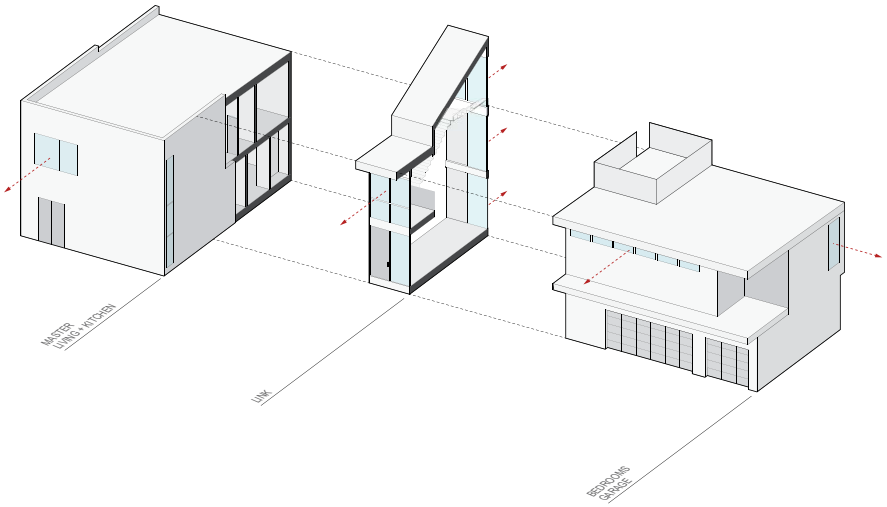


LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2

SITE PLAN



terminus from the bottom of the stairs—scoops in eastern and southern light.

"We try to terminate hallways with windows or art," says Dolezal. "In this case, long, vertical windows are placed at terminations of hallways to get that spatial experience to the outside." A vertical ribbon window also terminates the corridor leading to the children's bedrooms. Along that hallway, clerestory windows facing the street admit light while preserving privacy. "The higher the window is to the ceiling, the more light goes into the space," he says.

Simple interior details pack a lot of design into a modest budget. The architects left a structural beam exposed in the foyer, framing the wood trusses into it. Flooring throughout is tongue-in-groove maple, except for the ceramic

Above: The architects tested the roof monitor with a crane to locate it optimally for windows and views. The roof deck has sweeping skyline views of Omaha.

Private Residence

Omaha, Nebraska

ARCHITECT: Jeff Dolezal, AIA, principal in charge; Ryan Henrickson, design; Chris Houston, project architect, TACKarchitects, Omaha

BUILDER: Jesse Calabretto, Calabretto Building Group, Omaha

INTERIOR DESIGNER: TACKarchitects

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: TACKarchitects

PROJECT SIZE: 3,985 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.5 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: $138 per square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: Tom Kessler

KEY PRODUCTS

EXTERIOR CLADDING: Cambia, Viroc

ROOF: EPDM

WINDOWS: Kawneer Aluminum Storefront Windows

KITCHEN FAUCETS: Kohler

KITCHEN CABINETRY: KitchenCraft

COUNTERTOPS: Samsung Staron, Corian Quartz, Formica

MASTER TUB: Maax Optik

MASTER PLUMBING: Delta

SECONDARY BATH FAUCETS/TOILETS: Kohler

FLOORING: Armstrong, Florim, Cremo

DOOR HARDWARE: Schlage

HVAC: Carrier, Aprilaire

tile used in the foyer and kitchen, which contains a glassy walk-in wine room. At the top of the stairs, a bright yellow sliding barn door opens or closes the entrance to the master suite.

The clients, who bought the lot when the light-industrial neighborhood felt more desolate than it does today, also requested a fence for privacy. The solution was a simple cedar screen with some openness to it.

Given the new residential construction happening around them, no doubt the owners are happy they were the first to take the leap. "Now there are some historic restorations, multifamily buildings, and warehouse conversions taking place," says Dolezal.—*C.W.*

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Gray Matters

1

2

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4

1. WALL ART

Miele's cooking appliances diversify into Graphite Grey, including a newly designed, 30-inch-wide Speed Oven—all expected to ship this spring.

Mieleusa.com

Circle 101 on inquiry card.

2. BLACK IN STYLE

Bosch Home Appliances introduces its first black stainless steel kitchen suite, with a special finish designed to protect against scratches and fingerprints.

Bosch-home.com/us

Circle 102 on inquiry card.

3. FORTUNATE FLAME

Its "cool wall technology" provides Ortal's new Lyric fireplaces complete freedom from clearance restrictions. Stainless steel burners are 4 inches deep for a consistent, realistic flame, says the maker.

Ortalheat.com

Circle 103 on inquiry card.

4. WILD TILE

Ege Seramik's "wide plank" Amazon porcelain tiles mimic species of oak, ash, pearl, and wenge woods—all with the appearance of natural weathering.

Egeseramik-usa.com

Circle 104 on inquiry card.

5

6

7

8

5. ERE I SAW ELECTRIC

Napoleon launches a breakthrough, truly see-through electric fireplace called CLEARion. Viewing area is a sparkling 48 inches on each side.

NapoleonFireplaces.com

Circle 105 on inquiry card.

6. YALE UNIVERSALLY

The new Nest x Yale Lock adds app integration to your front door lock (or any house lock). Set the unit remotely, and/or give special passcodes to workers and friends—all from your phone.

Yalehome.com

Circle 106 on inquiry card.

7. HIDDEN ASSETS

Confident cooks can opt for ILVE's new windowless range for a sleek furniture look. The special-order ranges come in eight standard colors, 200 RAL colors, and mixed-metal options and leg styles.

Ilveappliances.com

Circle 107 on inquiry card.

8. BUILT LIKE A TANK

A.O. Smith beefs up its water heater line with a new commercial-grade series. The ProLine XE is the top unit, with glass tank lining, stainless steel anode rods, and brass drain valves, among other upgrades.

Hotwater.com

Circle 108 on inquiry card.

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Gray Lady

FELDMAN ARCHITECTURE
PROJECT LOCATION: SAN FRANCISCO

Project: Pacific Heights Residence; project size: 3.434 square feet; site size: 3,184 square feet; architect: Jonathan Feldman, AIA, Feldman Architecture, San Francisco. *Drawings: Feldman Architecture*

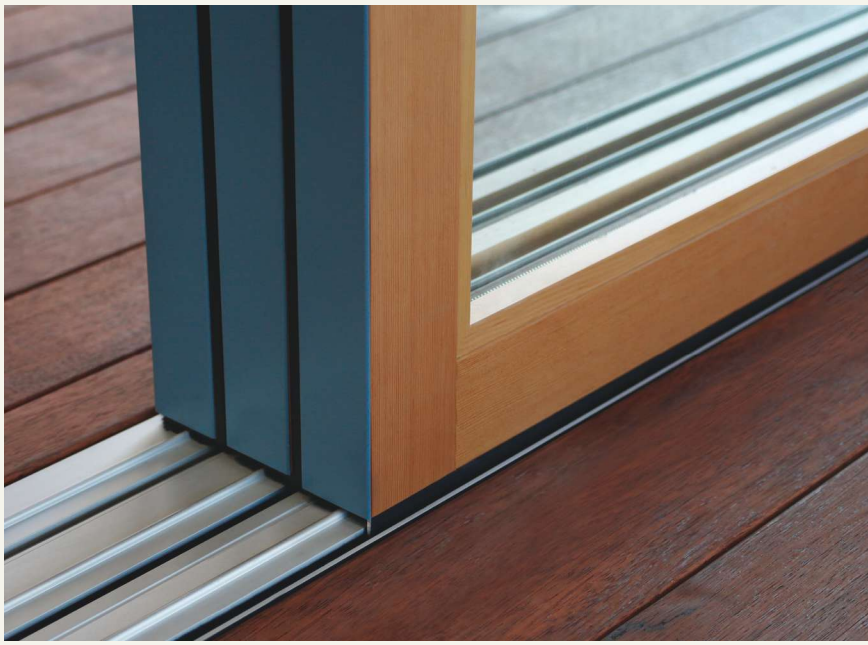
Jonathan Feldman, AIA, began his career remodeling San Francisco's lovely but troubled older houses. He and his firm, Feldman Architecture, have largely moved on to new custom homes, but occasionally, another opportunity to resuscitate a faded beauty arises. In this case, the opportunity came from his brother, who had just bought an 1860s Italianate row house in Pacific Heights—one in need of a complete overhaul.

The front façade of the house was protected by historic review, but Jonathan was free to alter the interior for better flow and functionality. "Our portfolio is very much a modernist one, but we love these old houses," says Jonathan. "We like to make them livable for today, without erasing their charm and what makes them special." Some of the heaviest interventions were behind the walls. "These houses weren't watertight, they had no insulation, and nothing is level. They also had no earthquake framing. So you really have to rebuild the entire house within the envelope."

And so he did. He also improved the relationships between the main floor living areas, and he added a new rear deck. The top floor gained a master suite scaled for modern tastes. And, because the site is sloped, he was able to carve out a new basement with a gym and a den that opens to a patio.

The main event, however, is a new stair with open treads and a mesh screen that brings natural light down through the "light-starved" building. Finally, the entire exterior was "dipped" in gray paint. Says the architect, "There's so much frill on the outside that when you blend it into one tone, it makes it so much stronger."
—*S. Claire Conroy*

CONTEMPORARY CLAD | A MATTER OF STILE



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