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VOL. 1, 2020

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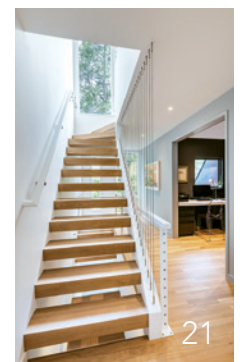
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Photo: Ema Peter Photography

# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

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## Inside Story



There's a **common** misconception among some members of the public—and even some pros in the homebuilding industry—that residential architecture ends at the front door of a house. You and I know that nothing could be further from the truth. A well-executed custom home considers every aspect of both the exteriors and the interiors, along with the building's relationship to the site and neighborhood. Once you start pulling at threads—and slicing design responsibility into multiple trades—it's easy to lose track of the core vision, coherence, and cohesion of the overall design.

For most of his career, the well-known residential architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, would not accept any commission that didn't also include interior design in the scope of work. That's not to say that he personally picked every paint color, but he had a talented interior designer on staff who did, while always keeping in mind the goals of the project and the aesthetics championed by the firm. For many years, Therese Baron Gurney, ASID, was one of those staff designers. She now collaborates with her husband, Robert M. Gurney, FAIA, also an award-winning residential architect in Washington, D.C.

This streamlined approach to project delivery makes a great deal of sense. Furniture selection, lighting, kitchen and bath design, paint and tile colors, even art choice are well within the purview of what many architecture firms can and do handle nowadays. Quite a few of the architects we've featured in this magazine have flown to Europe to choose marble for a project, for instance, or pallets of historic stone and other salvaged materials.

In truth, residential architects have always provided these services at some level, but they are now pointedly getting the word out to clients—by highlighting projects that were interiors-driven on their websites, by touting staff who are specially trained or adept at the discipline, and by building out entire divisions devoted to interiors.

Hutker Architects, with offices in Vineyard Haven, Falmouth, and Boston in Massachusetts, has long had an interior design arm to support its clients' needs. Because so many of the firm's commissions are for second or third homes, clients often require absolutely everything for their new house—fixtures, furnishings, linens, housewares, and more. The firm prides itself on its “heirloom” approach to residential architecture, one that frequently includes furniture custom designed for the house—a master bedroom suite, for instance, or dining table and chairs. Other firms have designed their own lines of door hardware and light fixtures.

It's clear that design vision does not stop at the front door; it permeates everything an architect does. To elucidate and celebrate that process, we are launching a new feature in the magazine called RD Interior Architecture. Turn to page 20 for the “inside” scoop.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. Claire Conroy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

S. Claire Conroy  
Editor-in-Chief  
claire@SOLAbands.com

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# Urban Blessings

ZACK | DE VITO ARCHITECTURE  
SAN FRANCISCO

Architect Jim Zack, AIA, was born into building, and it has served him well in San Francisco’s hot, haute housing market. Practicing residential architecture here is a blessing and a curse. Thanks to the lucrative tech industry that has come to define the Bay Area, there is a steady supply of sophisticated clients for whom money is no object. That’s all well and good if you’re up for the challenge of demanding clients, stratospheric construction costs, and a fraught approvals process, which can drag on for years.

At heart artists and entrepreneurs, Jim and his wife/business partner Lise de Vito have a track record as savvy navigators. Since its launch in 1991, the firm has embraced diverse projects

ranging in type from single-family houses to restaurants, condo buildings, and speculative development, and in price from \$1 million to \$6 million. The couple have forged a path for themselves by following the opportunities in their own backyard and building on their strengths.

Indeed, building is in Jim’s blood. His dad was a serial remodeler and house flipper. Growing up in Carmel, California, Jim helped him build a house for class credit while attending junior college. “Dad had a house on a big lot; we tore it down and built two small ones,” he recalls. “He said, if you help me do this, you can have one of the houses.” Before going on to grad-



Portraits: Courtesy Zack | de Vito

Partners Jim Zack and Lise de Vito



Photos this page: Bruce Damonte

This page: Zack | de Vito’s business is still fueled by the success of the 2014-15 speculative Steelhouse 1+2, a two-unit compound separated by a courtyard on a conventional lot. The buyer for this project has commissioned the firm to build another house and outbuilding, GrandView Estate, currently in the works.



Renderings: Zack | de Vito



*This page:* The 25-foot-by-125-foot lot for GrandView Estate cost \$1.35 million and had 15 offers. Jim and another builder/developer partner designed and entitled the two-house compound, then offered the package for sale. The buyer for Steelhouse 1+2 bought it, and hired Jim and his partner to tailor the project to his needs and \$6 million budget.

uate school at UC Berkeley, Jim bought another house for \$99,000 and flipped it. These projects conferred more than one kind of currency. By the time he got a Master of Architecture degree in 1990, he had almost eight years of construction experience and a solid platform for launching a design/build business.

That's no small advantage in this rarified realm. While some design/build firms are primarily builders who also do design work, Jim is licensed as both a contractor and an architect, which allows the couple to provide either service or both, depending on the project. Structured as two separate

legal entities, the design/build model is one way they differentiate their firm from the competition, which is fierce. "I heard there are more architects here per capita than anywhere in the world," Jim says. While there is no official source for that number, AIA San Francisco alone lists more than 200 firms.

### Range of Motion

When Jim and Lise met in 1991, she was fresh out of architecture school and working for another local firm. When he needed help on a project, she moonlighted for him. Soon the volume of work was more than he could handle,

and Lise hopped over officially in 1997. "By that time we had already been doing work for ourselves," Lise says. "We purchased a property, did an extensive remodel, and condoed it, doing what we could to max out the value. We lived in it for several years, sold half of that property, and continued to do speculative work." In addition, Jim and Lise focused on residential renovations and new construction for clients. In the late 1990s they stumbled upon a restaurant renovation, and for the next 10 years or so became the go-to design firm for restaurant renovations, but they no longer pursue that sector.



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Photos this page: Bruce Damonte



*This page:* The 2017 HillSide House is one of the few high-end speculative projects the firm has done outside of the city. Built into a hillside in Mill Valley, the project emphasizes energy-efficient design and locally sourced materials. The flexible floor plan offers a myriad of scenarios for occupation.

“We love single-family custom work where we can design a high level of detail. We design so we can control the fabrication and come up with ways to get things built on-site.”

—Jim Zack, AIA

The couple’s current model of practice—20 to 40 percent design/build, the rest design only—has been in place since the early 2000s, but their bandwidth has grown since then. Fluctuating between 12 and 20 employees, the current roster of 15—four designers plus Lise and Jim, and 11 project managers and carpenters—“is a little low for us,” Jim says. It’s enough talent, though, to take on 15 to 20 projects a year, with five or six waiting for entitlement at any given time. Lise and Jim usually team up to design development projects but work separately on client commissions.

“The construction labor market is extremely tight, especially here,” Jim says. “Anyone who’s any good is already working unless they’re just moving into the Bay Area.” The wildfires occurring 50 to 60 miles inland have made this condition worse. Almost 20,000 homes have been lost in the last five or six years, he says. With all the replacement stock under construction, “that’s put a strain on available labor in my market.”

In fact, the firm has just begun to design a \$1.2 million, 3,000-square-foot house in Sonoma County for a couple who lost their home to wildfire. “I think the thing we do best is wealthy people’s houses, whether in the city or the country,” Jim says. “We love single-family



custom work where we can design a high level of detail.” That includes executing metal fabrication and steelwork, something the carpenters can do on-site more economically than a typical contractor could, Jim says. “We design so we can control the fabrication and come up with ways to get things built on-site, creating digital files that are sent out to get parts made.”

Small commercial and multifamily buildings—four to nine units, some of

them mixed use—are also a substantial part of the business. On the boards is a 3,000-square-foot office renovation for a venture capital company. And plans for the couple’s dream project are in the works: transforming a “dumpy warehouse” into a five-story mixed-use building on 15th Street with six residential units, plus retail and two or three commercial spaces. Currently they are leasing and subletting the building with an option to buy.

## Risks and Rewards

San Francisco’s serious housing shortage means that new homes typically sell within a week with multiple cash offers, Jim says. That makes speculative development almost a no-brainer. But it’s not for the faint of heart. Currently the firm is piggybacking on the success of 2014–2015’s Steelhouse 1 + 2. That was a two-unit courtyard compound where they created a new three-story house at the front of the lot and remod-

Photos this page: Cesar Rubio



*This page:* The custom-designed RidgeView House, completed in 2017, showcases the firm’s strength at weaving indoors and outdoors into a single, unified, light-filled house. Located in St. Helena, the house takes in views of Napa Valley to the west and forests to the east. Concrete, corten steel, and natural cedar building materials blend in with the home’s rocky site.



Photo this project: Kelly Duggan

This page: Completed in 2017, the design/build commercial project for CMG Landscape Architecture provides 10,000 square feet of workspace for the growing landscape firm, friends of Zack I de Vito.

eled the existing house at the back of the deep lot, with a shared green courtyard between them.

GrandView, a similar project on a rare vacant lot in Upper Noe Valley, started out on spec but is now being designed for the client who had purchased Steelhouse—a 35-year-old with a budget of \$6 million. The 25-foot-wide-by-125-foot-deep lot cost \$1.35 million and had 15 offers, Jim says. He and a builder—a long-time development partner—prevailed in the purchase and designed and entitled two houses, then offered the package for sale. “We made a little money off the land deal and removed the risk of having to get money to build and sell the houses,” Jim says. “The client hired us to design and build the two houses for use as his estate. He will live in the front house with his kids and partner, and the rear house is for entertainment, a study, and studio.”

Working with clients who suddenly possess astounding wealth is interesting, to say the least. “I have clients who weren’t billionaires when I first worked with them but are now,” Jim says. “Some

clients have built services that people use every day. People with new money want the best of everything and are a little know-it-all; they’ve researched products on the web. My old-money clients have more modest tastes.”

Not that they’re complaining. But both Lise and Jim would say that their

best clients are themselves. “We have lived in three-quarters of the six spec projects we’ve done,” says Lise, who in addition to doing architecture, furniture design, and marketing, often designs the landscape and lighting on spec projects and works with stagers. “Not only is it a process we enjoy and



Photos this project: Bruce Damonte

This page: A mainstay for the firm before the recent housing boom was restaurant and retail design. This design-only project from 2012, a bakery called Craftman & Wolves, combines both.

that has brought revenue, but it's also satisfying on a personal level. It gives us freedom to do what we want design-wise, and it informs client work."

Ultimately, though, development depends on having the right financing. In a city where one needs \$500,000 in cash just to get in the door, the firm is looking for deep-pocketed investors, which would allow them to take on more projects simultaneously. Meanwhile, Lise and Jim live in a remodeled house on more than a quarter-acre in Glen Park where they plan to add a second house à la Steelhouse and GrandView. "We're trying to create this urban infill," she says. "We have a density problem, so we have an opportunity to make a difference."

—Cheryl Weber

Photo this project: Bruce Damonte



This page: Jim and Lise's own house, the 2008 speculative project the couple ultimately occupied, has won more than a dozen national design awards. Laidley Street Residence demonstrated the design/build firm's full range of services and its commitment to ecological building.

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# No Small Jobs

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There are no small projects that don't also contain a seed of potential to blossom into large projects, and this is especially true of older houses. This particular one, a reinvention of a charming 1920s Tudor, began as an accessibility retrofit for a couple. The husband was beset with mobility challenges when they first approached architect William Ruhl, FAIA, for help. The quirky home in Newton, Massachusetts, was lovable, but it wasn't very livable, and its chief obstacles were small level changes connecting key areas of the house. Here a step, there a step, everywhere a step.

When Will arrived to see the house and determine how he might tackle its problems, he was dumbfounded. He and his wife had owned its near replica and had struggled with many of the same assets and deficiencies. He was eager to apply his intimate knowledge of the building to a new set of program requirements. "The clients had done a lot of work already," he recalls.

*This page:* The modern addition is subtle from the street. It rises up to allow light into the lower level and because, in the city's game of inches, the team could not add square footage in the basement. The living room received a fireplace upgrade, and the powder room is now reoriented away from the living room for greater privacy.



*This page and opposite:* A tiny, 60-square-foot addition (the maximum allowed by the city) inserted at the center of the house introduces much-needed light through the core of the building. The addition enabled Will to flip the stair and eliminate multiple small level changes on the first floor.

“They had replaced windows and done a ton of shoring up work. And when I met with them, they were talking about remodeling for accessibility and adding an elevator. But then they disappeared for about a year.”

At the end of that year, the wife returned—her husband had died in the intervening time, and she had no current issues with mobility. “When she came back around, she had a completely new vision of what she wanted,” says Will. Her love for the clinker brick house was unchanged, but her new agenda was to combat its dark interiors, its large but poorly laid out kitchen, and its small, somewhat useless secondary spaces. Having shared the journey of her husband’s decline, she retained the idea of addressing excessive level changes on the first floor.





*This page:* A true cook's kitchen makes more functional use of an older addition, creating useful storage and a convivial connection to a new sitting area. A back deck services both the kitchen/sitting wing and the dining room.



“When we first met, we established that I had lived, breathed, and grappled with the problems of this house. My wife and I chose to keep the quirky level changes, and just put on an addition off the back,” says Will. “The original house was designed so you enter into a slightly recessed area and then step up to the living room. To get to the back of the house, it was three steps up to a double-sided stair landing and then steps back down on the other side. So that was the big architectural requirement—to make everything on the first floor the same level.”

No easy task, for sure, but one made even more difficult by the town's highly restrictive, anti-McMansion codes. Building a large addition to help sort everything out was not an option. “This is the smallest



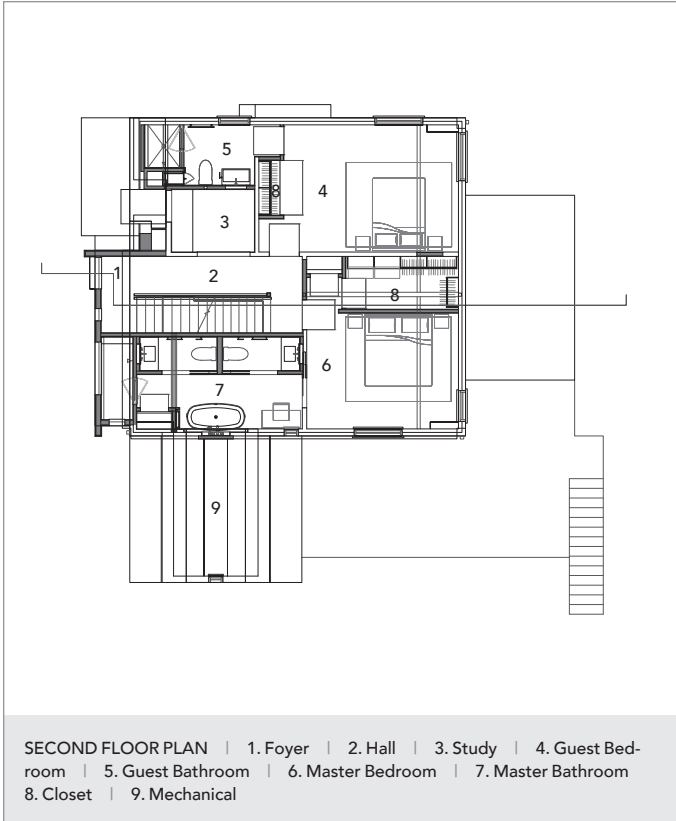
house on the street, but the town is very strict about adding floor space,” he explains. “We had to calculate everything down to the square inch.”

Ultimately, they were allowed to build a 60-square-foot addition, sliced into the core of the house at the approximate midpoint. That enabled Will to design an entirely new stair (without the problematic landing and steps) and flip it 180 degrees. While tiny, the addition and its strategic array of fenestration solved the client’s primary desire for more natural light in the house. Coming in at the center and from above through a 6-foot-square window on the third floor, light now permeates the house where it’s needed most.

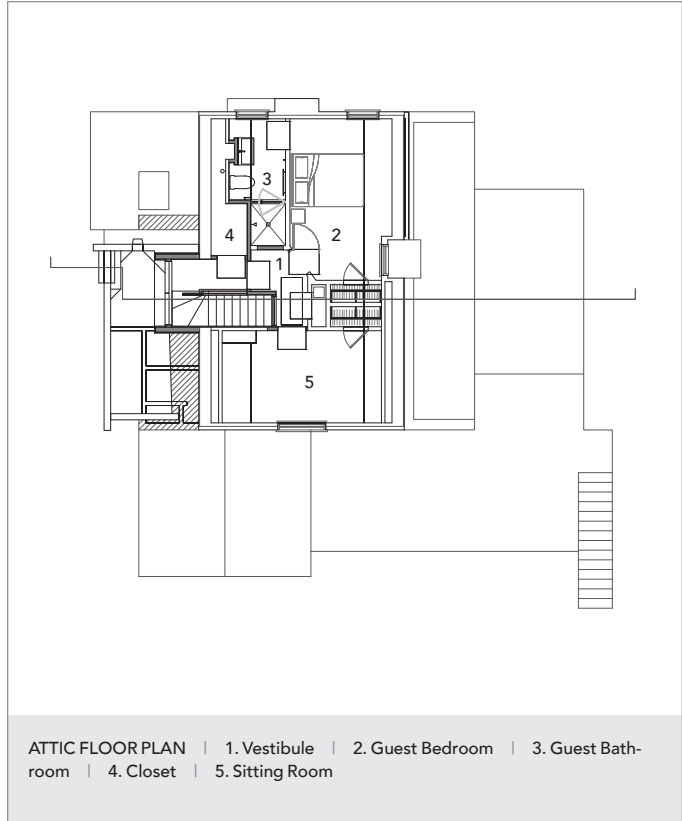
The team also widened nearly every doorway, which allows central light to join other sources from the perimeter of the house. Select windows at the perimeter were enlarged and, in some cases, taken down to the floor plate and up to the ceiling. Not only do they bring in more light, they modernize the look of the interiors.



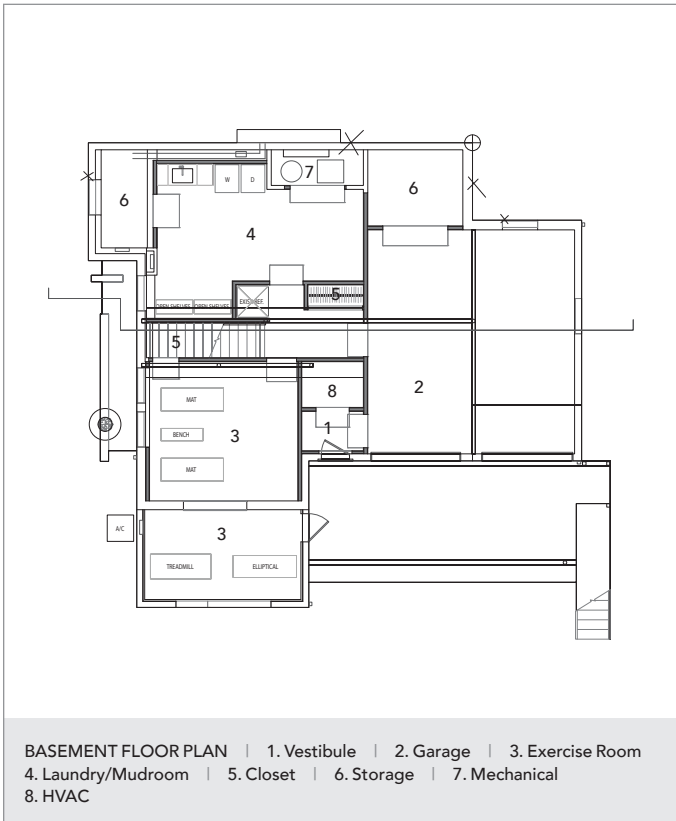
The old kitchen wing had terrible flow and function, and almost no place to sit. The redesigned room carves out the client’s wished-for casual sitting area, and opens the space to natural light and edited leafy views.



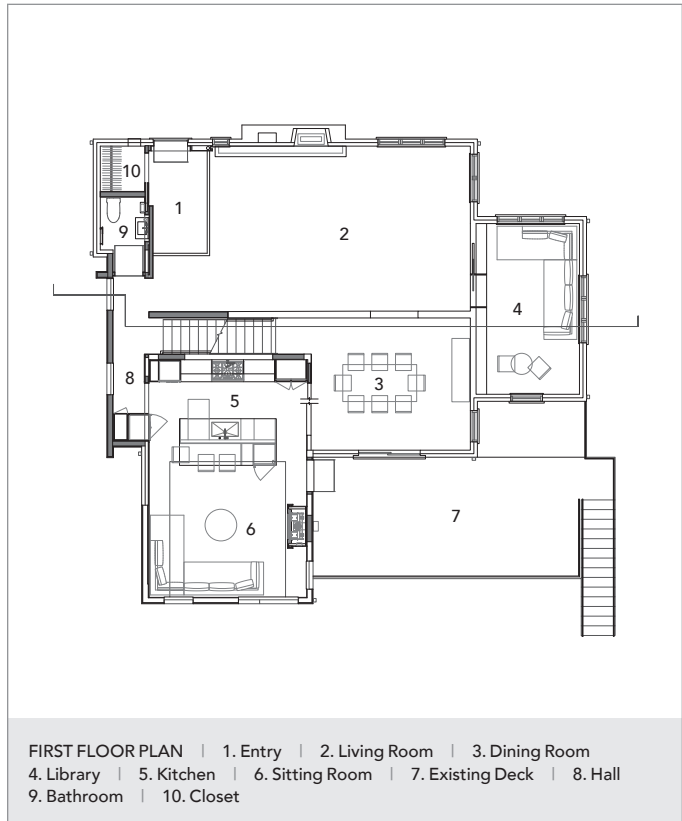
SECOND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Foyer | 2. Hall | 3. Study | 4. Guest Bedroom | 5. Guest Bathroom | 6. Master Bedroom | 7. Master Bathroom | 8. Closet | 9. Mechanical



ATTIC FLOOR PLAN | 1. Vestibule | 2. Guest Bedroom | 3. Guest Bathroom | 4. Closet | 5. Sitting Room



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN | 1. Vestibule | 2. Garage | 3. Exercise Room | 4. Laundry/Mudroom | 5. Closet | 6. Storage | 7. Mechanical | 8. HVAC



FIRST FLOOR PLAN | 1. Entry | 2. Living Room | 3. Dining Room | 4. Library | 5. Kitchen | 6. Sitting Room | 7. Existing Deck | 8. Hall | 9. Bathroom | 10. Closet



*This page:* The new stairwell in the 60-square-foot addition is the big, transformative move in this interior renovation. It conveys light down from the top floor, through the custom, open-riser stair, to the first level. Collaborating closely with the architects, a talented craftsman took great pains to get every tread on the challenging stair placed perfectly.

### Light and Bright

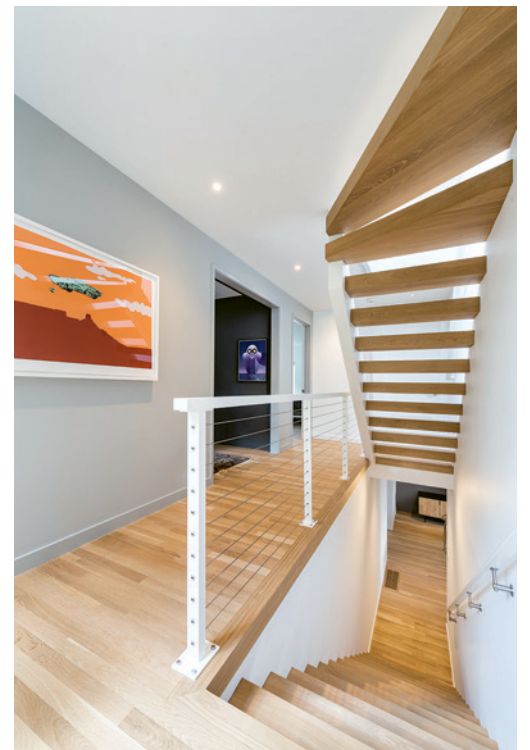
The client drove the decision-making for every material—every choice needed to hew to light and bright. Will had the existing white oak floors repaired where needed, and sanded and bleached. The custom-built kitchen cabinets are a pale Tabu veneer with a delicate wood grain. “I wanted them to feel more like paneling,” he says. Solid surface counters and backsplash complement the wood. “Her thing was whites and grays, which worked nicely with our tastes.”

“I think the design improved with all the restrictions and problem solving.”

—William Ruhl, FAIA

While the south-facing kitchen didn't really gain space, a new layout enabled Will to add the client's requested sitting room and fireplace. (A fireplace in the living room received a modern, streamlined facelift.)

On the second level, the addition opened up space for a home office, carved out of a former hall bathroom. Bedrooms were reassigned and upgraded, with the guest room now occupying the original home's master quarters and the master relocated to the rear, sunny side of the





house. Will remodeled both the guest bathroom and master bathroom completely, and added an extra water closet to the latter per the client.

The third floor had been nearly inaccessible, according to Will, prior to the new stair. With better access, it made sense to redo the extra bedrooms it contained, and turn one into a flex space, creating a suite for either a nanny or caregiver.

### Stair Apparent

And so, the small job morphed into a major architectural interiors renovation touching nearly every component of the house (including upgrading all the systems and insulation). Those 60 extra square feet and the brilliantly designed and crafted new stair—measured and modeled and revised repeatedly—made all the difference in the building’s appeal and function.

Says Will, “I think the design improved with all the restrictions and problem solving. We’d find that we were a square inch over and then ask ourselves, how are we going to solve that? And the design would get better.” –S. Claire Conroy





*This page and opposite:* The team reconfigured and renovated all the bedrooms and bathrooms. The game of inches also played out in the master bathroom, where the architects captured just enough space to recess the freestanding tub.

## Tudor Modern

Newton, Massachusetts

**ARCHITECT:** William T. Ruhl, FAIA, and Sandra A. Jahnes, AIA, LEED AP, principals; Nerijus Petrokas, LEED GA; Kristen Bender Daabul, Assoc. AIA, LEED GA, NCIDQ; Ruhl Studio Architects, Watertown, Mass.

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Kristen Bender Daabul, Assoc. AIA, LEED GA, NCIDQ (formerly with Ruhl Walker Architects, now with Walker Architects)

**BUILDER:** Rick Guidelli, founding principal; Doug Bellow, principal; Zach Bensley, project manager; Zach Gilchrest, carpenter; Gilman Guidelli & Bellow, Newton

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Jennifer Brooke, Christian Lemon, Lemon Brooke, LLC, Concord, Mass.

**ENGINEERING:** Jennifer McClain, PE, and Stacy Weaver, PE, principals, RSE Associates, Watertown, Mass.

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,000 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** .5 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$350 a square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Nat Rea Photography

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CABINETRY:** Custom kitchen cabinets, Tabu Natural + Dyed Tay Koto 04.059 veneer; custom master bath vanities, Tabu Natural + Dyed Tay Koto 04.002 veneer; custom powder room vanity, Tabu Walnut 51.B02 BIO 2 veneer

**CLADDING:** Copper, Boral TruExterior nickel-gap poly-ash siding, James Hardie Reveal Panel System, slate

**COOKTOP/RANGE:** Thermador

**COOKING/VENTILATION:** Miele

**COUNTERTOPS:** Kitchen, Caesarstone White Attica Quartz; master bath, Caesarstone Pure White quartz; powder room, Calacatta gold marble

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**ENTRY DOORS/LOCKS:** Emtek

**ESPRESSO MAKER:** Gaggenau

**FAUCETS/SOWERHEADS:** Kitchen, Blanco Blancoculina; Blanco Cantata wall-mounted

pot filler; master bath, AXOR Urquiola; guest bath, Hansgrohe Talis S

**FIREPLACE SURROUNDS:** Living room, Ashfield stone schist; family room, Ann Sacks Fountainebleau limestone

**FLOORING:** Rift-cut white oak

**HVAC:** ADP, Lennox, Fantech

**MEDICINE CABINETS:** Robern

**MICROWAVE:** Bosch Microwave Drawer, 800 Series

**OVENS:** Gaggenau

**PASSAGE DOORS/HARDWARE:** TruStile Doors, Emtek

**REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** Custom copper and slate; Carlisle Syntec EPDM

**SHOWERHEADS:** AXOR Urquiola with Dornbracht body sprays

**SINKS:** Kitchen, Blanco Quatrus; master bath, Kohler Verticyl; secondary bathrooms, Kohler Stillness

**TILE:** Foyer, Stone Source Provenza Q-Stone, Gray; master bath, Ann Sacks Palladium travertine; guest bath, Waterworks Greystone, Tilebar Marbella

**TOILETS:** TOTO Aquia

**TOWEL HEATER:** Vogue UK Serene MDO49

**TUB:** Hydrosystem Newbury Freestanding Bathtub

**UNDERLAYMENT, SHEATHING:** Henry Blueskin VP100

**VANITIES/LAVS:** Duravit ME by Starck

**VENTILATION:** Panasonic, Fantech

**WASHER/DRYER:** Electrolux

**WINDOWS:** Loewen

**WINE REFRIGERATION:** TRUE

# House Revival

BY BLAKE HELD, AIA



Blake Held, AIA

For more than 20 years, I had passed the seemingly abandoned house on my drive to and from work. Boarded up from a past fire with peeling paint and a sagging foundation, the once proud house appeared destined to fall to ruin. Lying close to the road at a busy intersection with a highway entrance and light industry encroaching, the house had stopped serving as a residence long ago.

Someone needs to save that house, someone needs to move that house, is the mantra I recited time and time again to my wife. I couldn't have known then that we would be the ones.

The Rochester, New York, area has among the highest level of older housing in the country. According to government statistics, 78 percent of our housing stock was built before 1960 and 5 percent before 1940. This was a deciding factor in my choice to pursue the niche in residential architecture I have: new traditional-style homes, but primarily additions to and renovations of older and historic homes. While I admire the work of many fellow architects creating the crisp contemporary houses that speak so clearly to our modern society, I find little opportunity in this market to pursue that design approach. Furthermore, I must admit, while I can appreciate the thought, theory, and precision of craft behind such work, I have little aptitude for it. Instead, I find greater affinity for the theory of molding—the finely proportioned window, the imperfect beauty of handcrafted work, and the seamlessly integrated, contextual response.

We are taught as architects to make a difference in our environment. One interpretation of that is to make a visual statement, to create a work that is easily identifiable by its difference or even rejection of the context of its surroundings. The interpretation I choose is to seek to fulfill the potential within the context. Sometimes this means being invisible, as in the best tradition of preservation architecture.

Sometimes dismissed as mere mimicry, traditional design in our modern age often takes tremendous discipline and creativity to subtly achieve a workable plan for a modern lifestyle or a seemingly simple detail within a traditional language. Beyond this, the challenge an existing structure poses—forcing one to work within its bounds rather than idealized geometries—is what drives me forward in architecture. I appreciate the puzzle those limits present more than I would



Photo: Bauer Photography



Photo: Blake Held, AIA

This page: Blake moved the 1827 Greek Revival house in pieces to a new, more rural site, and lovingly restored every square inch of its handcrafted details.

a blank canvas. Adversity can be a powerful muse. There is also a stylistic versatility forced on the traditional design architect which I enjoy. Linguistically, I am competent in one language—yet, in my years of practice, I believe I have become fluent in several historic styles, among them: Arts and Crafts, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival.

This last, Greek Revival, is my favorite. I'm sure my youth spent in Charleston, South Carolina, with its wealth of exemplary antebellum architecture, strongly influenced my taste. From my suburban '70s childhood home, I fantasized about what it would be like to live in one of those structures while paging through my favorite book, Virginia Lee Burton's "The Little House," which, little did I know, would plant the seed for moving a house to save it. Rochester remains rich in Greek Revival structures, having first boomed into a wealthy city with the opening of the Erie Canal during the height of

the Greek Revival style. Many structures sadly are now crumbling, and, as was the case for the house of my focus, poorly located given the push of urban sprawl.

Built around 1827, this house was once the pride of a wealthy farming family, founders of the community of Henrietta in which they lived. An early example of the Greek Revival, the house shows characteristics of both Federal and Greek Revival styles. There are finer, more richly detailed examples in the region, but few with the simple, well-proportioned mass and confidence exuded by this home. For me, there is a modernity in its simplicity which is gently offset by elaborately carved, typically broad heavy casings and wood mantels.

So, on the fateful day in 2001, when the nonagenarian owner, Jim, walked into our office offering the home for a dollar to whomever would move and restore it, I leapt at the opportunity.

I spent months preparing a prospectus of sorts for my wife, who was completely content in our present, recently restored Arts and Crafts home. I reviewed finances, house movers, contractors, time frame, etc. I capped it all off with a photoshopped image of the house in a restored state with our two smiling children in the foreground. This was enough to convince her to at least take a look. On a bitterly cold February morning, Jim handed us each a lantern and let us in. We meandered through aisles formed of stacked, charred papers three and four feet high to view smoke-stained walls of crumbling plaster and bubbling trim paint. “Isn’t it amazing?!” I asked. I can’t say she agreed, but perhaps out of a misguided faith in my abilities, she relented.

The new site was 14 miles away, a rural setting befitting the home’s farming roots. There was a crane at the original site to lift the sections onto the trailer and, months later, at the new site to replace them. The house moved in five pieces, taking five hours for each section, and two weeks in preparation between sections. At least six sep-

Before Photos: Blake Held, AIA



After Photos: Bauer Photography




This page: Blake and his family put sweat equity into stripping and repainting the trim on the old house, and salvaging its wide-plank flooring and 8-foot-by-8-foot pocket doors.

arate permits, two escort vehicles, three off-duty state troopers, and a crew walking along the route to remove and replace obstacles (mailboxes, etc.) and lift electrical lines were required for each move. It was many months of foundation work, restoration, new electric, plumbing, heating, roofing, insulation, and finally drywall. We put some sweat equity into the house where we could, stripping and repainting trim. By the summer of 2004, we had a 4,000-square-foot home with 9½-foot-high ceilings, elaborate casings and wood trim, wide-plank flooring, 8-foot-by-8-foot pocket doors separating the twin parlors, and so much more for far less than it would cost us to create this character anew.

“Was it worth it?” I am often asked. It was. We spent 15 years in the home. As my wife said, it was my third child, my lovingly adopted child. If good architecture is defined by making a difference, by improving upon the given environment, I believe I succeeded. Not only was a fine work of architecture rescued, but in doing so, many existing materials and examples of craftsmanship were retained. In response to the call to seek more energy-efficient structures, the preservationists remind us of the embodied energy in an existing structure. Despite the diesel expended to move the house, I believe, as I count the board feet of wide-plank flooring and wood siding alone, it was a net save on energy and material costs.

With our human children now moved away, the home was more than the two of us needed. I set out to find a new rescue in which to downsize and “simplify” our lives. “A marriage can only survive one house move,” my wife reminded me. One week ago, we closed the door on that

home for the last time. I had found a “new” home to rescue, dating from 1828. We didn’t need to move it, but if the first house adventure was an Odyssey in the Homeric tradition, this one was to be War and Peace, somehow longer and more difficult. More on that later. 



# Open to Interpretation

Designed for discovery and delight, a Vancouver house documents a family's multidimensional lives.

BY CHERYL WEBER

LOCATION: VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

ARCHITECT: CAMPOS STUDIO

BUILDER: OVERTON CONSTRUCTION





**Campos Studio** has a talent for twisting pristine, sophisticated spaces into realms of imagination and possibility. That makes the Brick House a dream dwelling for nimble minds like those of this couple and their four children, all under the age of 12. For years, the family had lived across the street from this lot on Vancouver's west side near the University of British Columbia. The neighborhood, next to the 2,000-acre Pacific Spirit Regional Park on university endowment land, is filled with professors who live in Arts and Crafts-style wood houses that were built in the 1920s and '30s to generate taxes for the university. Newer wood and stucco homes came along in the 1980s.

Having outgrown their home, the couple had been looking elsewhere, thinking they couldn't afford to buy a better house





*This page and opposite:* At the core of this playful, practical house for a couple and their four children is an open-riser stair and custom millwork storage wall that climbs three levels from basement to top floor. One splurge in the budget-driven project was the steel-and-marble kitchen island, where the kids can help roll out dough for cookies and build forts underneath.



in the community. But they loved the location, just four blocks from the ocean, and when their neighbor decided to sell his 1960s house on a double lot, they got first dibs. They were able to afford it by subdividing the lot and selling the other half to a developer. And they hired Campos Studio to replace the existing house with one that could accommodate their active family.

Practical and playful, the new construction sits on a 5,547-square-foot lot that is 30 feet wide and zoned to include a small building along the alley. It consists of a 3,800-square-foot main house and a 590-square-foot lane-way house—prioritized over a garage—at the back of the lot. “Much of the program had to do with the kids—two girls and two boys,” says principal Javier Campos. “We were tasked with making it kind of indestructible: ‘the kids are going to play everywhere, so you can’t get too precious.’”

That notion played to the architects’ strength. Their interest



in simple geometric forms that subtly stimulate the imagination was inspired by the “noncommittal structures” on Isamu Noguchi’s playgrounds, says architectural designer Czarina Ray. “We reference Noguchi’s aspect of play, in which none of the objects were designed for one particular use but open to interpretation,” she says. “Every child and adult will have a different imagination and creative mind; they will find their own way to hang out and use it.”

And in this house, they do. Conceived as an abstract box with interior volumes that bleed into each other, its three-story millwork stair core acts as a vertical multipurpose space—a wall of solids and voids on which one can store or display objects, sit, work, or make coffee. Transition zones such as stairs, multilevel landings, and vestibules serve as magical, liminal spaces that invite the occupants to spin in their own orbit, settling into solitary repose or joining the hive of activity.

“The different rooms can be fun but also look like architecturally sophisticated spaces.”

—Czarina Ray

The firm also has a knack for satisfying competing interests. The clients were set on having a clean, modern white brick house—an usual material choice for Vancouver. “We were not on board at first,” Javier says. “It was a bit difficult for us, because the residential core here is almost all wood.” The architects came up with a plan that mixed wood and brick, but the clients weren’t having it. “They just liked brick, and it’s their house, so we said, OK, what could we do?”

Agreeing to brick meant setting rules for its use—there would be no punched windows, only voids, and the perforations would be lined with wood. “The clients wanted to paint the brick white and have black metal windows and doors, which you see everywhere on Pinterest,” Javier says. “They wanted to use recycled brick, and when we found it, it had all these different colors that show their history. We said, let’s just mix this up. We made a deal that if they didn’t like it, they could paint it white, but we asked them to give us a chance to



*This page and opposite:* The clients initially requested a white-painted brick house, built from recycled brick, and steel windows—in a neighborhood characterized by wood structures. A happy compromise led to a natural brick exterior and white-painted brick interiors. In the dining room, a long table serves up meals, homework, and pingpong.



show them what it could look like. They were kind enough to do that and think it looks great.”

It’s an example of how projects evolve and become more interesting, Czarina says. “It would have been such a shame to cover up that history. Mixed together, the bricks become this new pattern. We like to work with craftspeople rather than controlling everything. We trust them to visualize as well.”

### Multidimensional

Oriented north-south, the house’s long west side faces a busy road and the densely forested park beyond. The new developer-built house is close by to the east. The front of the house faces south, and in back a deck and outdoor dining area look north across the lawn to the laneway house. Equipped with a kitchenette and bath, it serves as guest quarters for visiting parents and could be a future gym or hangout space when the children are teenagers.

The main house’s floor plan consists of discrete spaces that overlap each other, even vertically. The foyer opens to a central kitchen and sunken living room. On the other side of the foyer wall is the dining room, where a long wood table with slide-in benches often doubles as a pingpong table. Densely planted evergreens and a carefully composed western façade screen the main living area from the street





*This page:* The living room overlooks a back deck and the guesthouse at the rear of the lot. Clerestory windows wrap the built-ins and fireplace wall, bringing in another exposure of natural light while preserving privacy from neighbors.



activity, while a stretch of clerestory windows brings in light. Upstairs, a central play/study room and roof deck are flanked by the master suite and the two girls' bedrooms with en-suite baths. "We couldn't have the main floor as open to the forest as we'd have liked to, but the deck upstairs is pulled back so you don't notice the street but can see the forest," Javier says." The two boys' rooms are in the basement, along with a mudroom, family room, wine room, and storage and mechanical rooms.

Light-filled spaces and multifunctional built-ins inspire possibilities for work, play, puttering, and contemplation. "The dad described not wanting prescribed activities in each space," Czarina says. "We played on the idea of how the different rooms can be fun but also look like architecturally sophisticated spaces where adults like to be as well."

Milky white oak flooring and millwork supplies the

sophistication and durability the design team was after. “They have large dogs, so even though the house looks light and white, the floors have a brushed finish that won’t show scratches and will age with the house,” Czarina says.

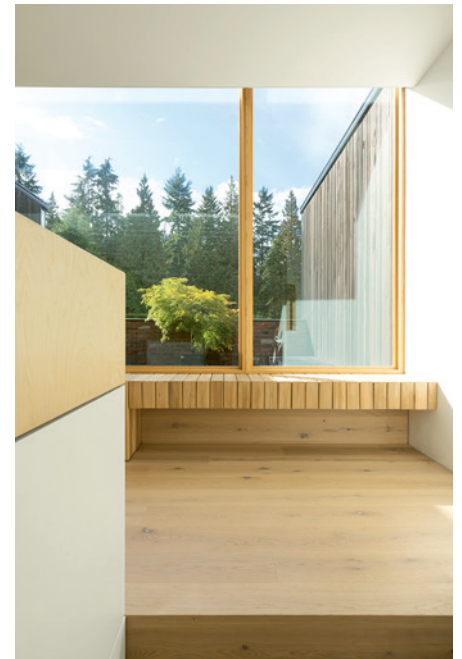
In the kitchen, white lacquered cabinets are integrated with the millwork stairwell, while the opposite storage wall continues into the living room. In a sea of oak, the house’s one material anomaly is the splash of marble on the kitchen island and in the master bath. The clients splurged on a fun, 14-foot-long kitchen island where they can roll out dough. More like a table than an island, it has legs at one end and stools “so the kids can make a fort underneath” if they want to, Czarina says. Cabinetry anchoring the other end contains an oven and drawers for iPads and laptops.

The design team incorporated underlying flex spaces for hobbies. At one corner of the dining room, millwork wraps around an opening containing a hidden bar that looks into the mudroom entry below. The husband, who has a whiskey collection, can open the doors and hang out there with his buddies. In contrast to a showy bar, it’s neutral enough for people to use it in their own way. And his record collection and turntable are hidden in the fireplace millwork.

### Playground in Disguise

Top to bottom, the rooms revolve around the millwork staircase. The family interacts with the design, from openings they can play through to niches they can sit in. “Rather than being a pancake of three separate floors, we came up with a way to tie them together almost like climbing a play structure,” Javier says. “The millwork wall beside the stair is always being used.”

In the basement family room, that wall contains an entertainment center and places to sit and put books. On the main floor it forms part of the kitchen countertop, a peek-through



*This page:* The multipurpose, tri-level millwork wall morphs into a desk on the top floor. A skylight placed over the open stair brings light down through the house.



storage cupboard, and coffee bar. Along the stair wall are lots of openings for books and objects, like a three-story bookcase. Upstairs it folds out into a work desk where the kids do their homework. “The whole stairway ends on top, where we carved out a deck with seating that looks over the forest next door and brings light in,” Javier says. A skylight at the top of the stairs sifts light down into the center of the house through the open-tread risers on a steel beam.

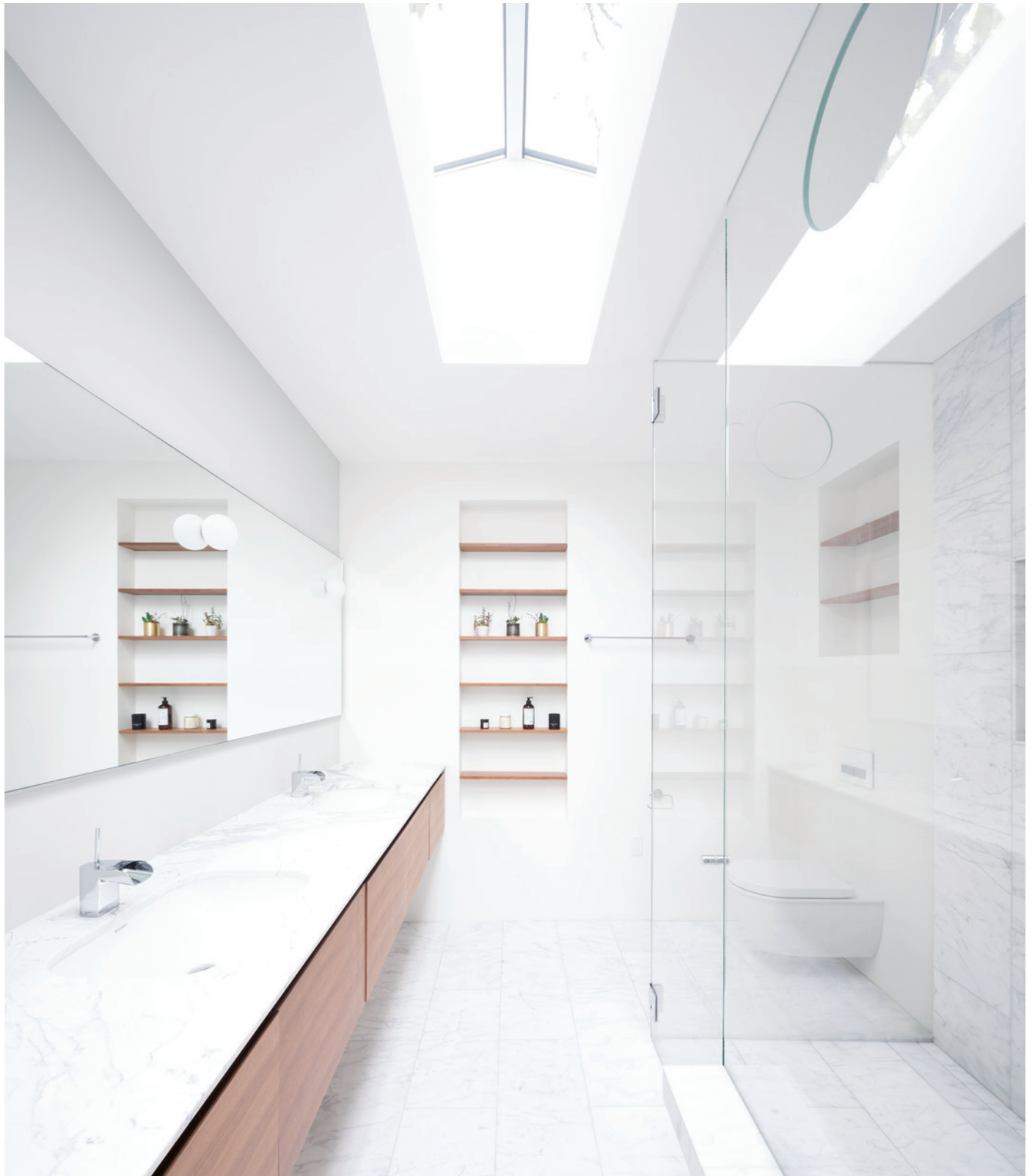
The interlocking compositions even allowed the architects to skirt some of the building codes. For example, the kids can—and do—jump onto the couch in the sunken living room from the kitchen landing. “Someone else may have put a guard rail there at the sofa but we made sure we sought other solutions to avoid those requirements,” Czarina says.

“It meets code because the couch is built in,” Javier explains. “If you miss the couch, you fall less than 2 feet. We tried to take barriers away so the kids could make up their own things to do.”

“A playground is disguised in the very structure of the house,” the design team noted in their project description. “The playground is so essential to the design of the house that one could miss it without the imagination of a child.”

*This page and opposite:* Interior doors are ceiling height with inset wood pulls and a roller latch at the top. In the girls’ bathroom, the mirror seems to extend from the corner window because second-floor windows sail past the building plane. The master bathroom received another splurge of marble for the counters, floors, and shower walls, and a skylight for natural illumination.







The family room occupies the lower level, with the millwork stair wall segueing into a built-in home entertainment center. A light well of board-formed-concrete is planted and embedded with outdoor lights to provide a pleasing view for the large wall of windows. Also on this level are the boys' bedrooms, a wine room, the laundry, and a mudroom.

### Art and Craft

Every point of passage was executed with thoughtful precision. Outside the boys' bedroom, a board-formed-concrete retaining wall creates a light well with a tree and a stepped platform where they can sit and play. Other gentle transitions encourage this too. Along the west side, the back steps to the mudroom entrance are a series of platforms along a board-formed-concrete wall, where a big window lets light into the family room. The wall is planted and embedded with lights to give the family room a view. "Because the sky is gray here, the concrete on the wall and on the exposed basement floor is tinted darker so it doesn't look dull and match the gray sky, and the darker color gives it more weight," Javier says.

"The playground is so essential to the design of the house that one could miss it without the imagination of a child."

—Campos Studio

## The Brick House

Vancouver, British Columbia

**ARCHITECT:** Javier Campos, principal; Czarina Ray and Alix Demontrod, architectural designers, Campos Studio, Vancouver

**BUILDER:** Overton Construction, Vancouver

**MILLWORK FABRICATOR:** RBM, Vancouver

**PROJECT SIZE:** 3,800 square feet (main house), 590 square feet (laneway house)

**SITE SIZE:** 0.127 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Ema Peter Photography

### KEY PRODUCTS

**COOKTOP:** Gaggenau

**COUNTERTOPS:** Calacatta marble and stainless steel

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**DRYWALL:** Gypsum Wall Board

**ENGINEERED LUMBER:** PSLs and TJs

**FINISH MATERIALS:** European oak

**FLOORING:** European Touch Hardwood

**HARDWARE, CABINETS:** Blum

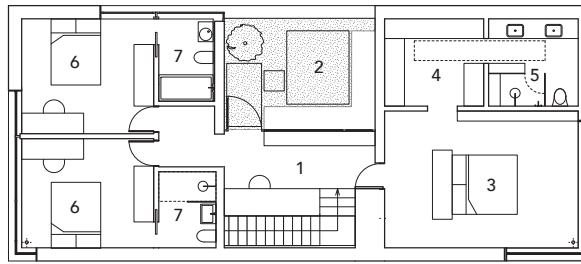
**INSULATION, HOUSEWRAP:** Rockwool, Blueskin

**OVEN:** Miele

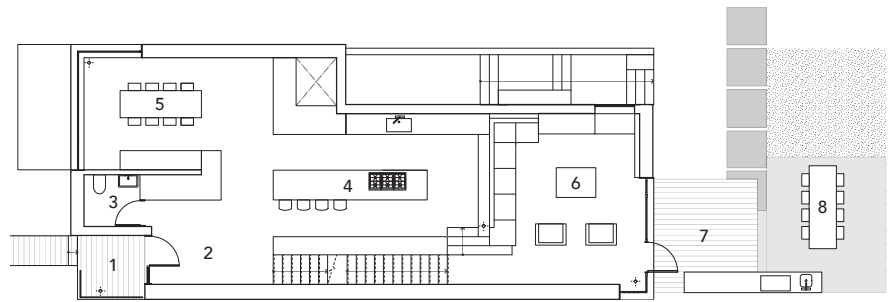
**ROOFING:** SOPREMA

**THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS:** Blueskin and poly

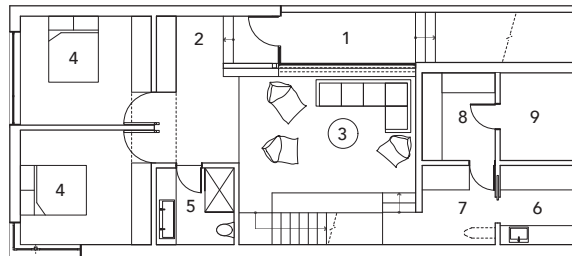
**WINDOWS:** Marvin



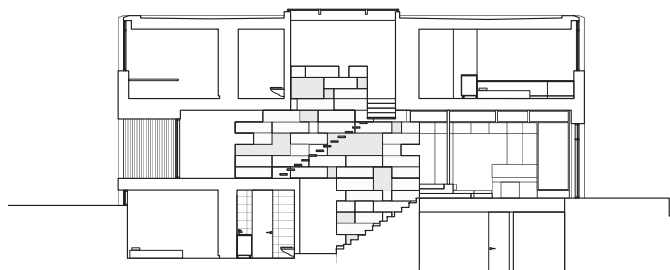
SECOND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Pocket Office | 2. West Roof Deck | 3. Master Bedroom | 4. Master Closet  
5. Master En-Suite | 6. Bedroom | 7. Bedroom En-Suite



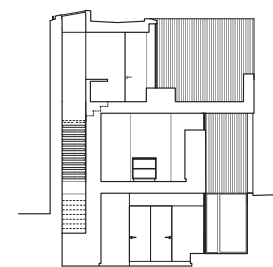
FIRST FLOOR PLAN | 1. Entry Porch | 2. Entry | 3. Powder Room | 4. Kitchen | 5. Dining Room  
6. Living Room | 7. Deck | 8. Outdoor Dining



BASEMENT PLAN | 1. Rear Entry | 2. Mudroom | 3. Family Room | 4. Bedroom | 5. Shower Room  
6. Laundry Room | 7. Wine Storage | 8. Storage Room | 9. Mechanical Room



LONG SECTION




SHORT SECTION



Although the Brick House cost about 25 percent more than the builder spec house next door, it appraised at 40 percent more—a gratifying testament to the value of deliberate, careful, custom urban design.

Material connections are equally artful. Campos Studio’s philosophy is to make things very simple, “almost dumb, but incredibly rich,” Czarina says. Interior doors are ceiling height with inset wood pulls and a roller latch at the top, rather than a lever and lock. And there are no curtain walls or fancy window systems, just standard windows detailed in a novel way. In a girl’s bathroom, the mirror seems to extend from the corner window. That’s because the second-floor windows sail past the ceiling plane. “That’s also where we hid the blinds,” Javier says. “It reflects the way we cut the brick on the outside—no hole in the wall but a void that’s been cut out. Without a window head, the way light flows in is very different.”

The foundation achieves this seamlessness too. Rather than pouring a conventional concrete foundation 10 inches above grade, Javier specified non-porous brick below grade that meets the recycled brick gracefully, adding a drainage trench to make sure the foundation doesn’t sit in water.

A testament to the value of such gestures, the house cost about 25 percent more than the spec house next door but was appraised at 40 percent more, Javier says. There’s little doubt that the design works as intended. “We thought the house would be empty the day we were photographing, but the family turned up and started doing what they normally do, and we captured those moments,” Javier says. “It shows that the house works very well for them.” 

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— Andy Fotsch  
Will & Fotsch Architects, Inc.

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FOR MORE INFO CIRCLE 11

# The Urban House

A trio of new neighborhood houses  
answers context with invention.

BY S. CLAIRE CONROY AND CHERYL WEBER





## Hewn House

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AUSTIN, TEXAS

MATT FAJKUS ARCHITECTURE

**Urban houses need to** respond to the warp and weft of their neighborhoods—the prevailing context and the conditions of their sites. In the case of this up-and-coming neighborhood in East Austin, Texas, the dominant context is a fulsome canopy of leafy trees. There are houses nearby, of course, but they are a motley assortment of humble bungalows and densely packed developer speculative houses. That left Matt Fajkus, AIA, and project manager Sarah Wassel more elbow room for invention, as long as the house they designed tipped a hat to the neighboring gabled roofs.

The client on the project is a long-time acquaintance—a savvy Realtor who handled the deal for the firm's office space—with the courage of his convictions and an innovative urban program. He wanted his new house to evoke the warmth of a vacation



cabin, complete with central hearth and closely connected indoor/outdoor spaces. Although single, he asked for a bedroom count that would please his bank and local real estate comps, adding up to about 2,500 square feet of living space. Oh, and he requested a separate, 500-square-foot, self-contained accessory dwelling unit (ADU). The entire program had to wedge onto a 6,316-square-foot lot and do so with considerable architectural appeal.

While the main house is layered with small delights, the ADU is pared to the simple necessities of full-time habitation—one bedroom, one bath, a kitchen, a small interior living space, plus a compact outdoor space. Designed

to be highly flexible, it will serve initially as a source of rental income, but it could easily morph into a home office or home-based business, caregiver quarters, or a guesthouse.

Because he had owned a rental unit next to his principal residence previously, the client understood well his threshold for privacy and separation. Accordingly, there's actually a little less privacy in this arrangement than a newbie client might have asked for. There's proximity in the client's parking area, located by the unit's entrance, and also in the unit's outdoor courtyard space, placed hard by the terrace for the main house. "Some people might feel strange about parking by the ADU,"



says Sarah. “But he’s comfortable with what it means to max out the density—to sacrifice some privacy for proximity.”

Currently, a large, amply landscaped planter provides visual separation for the courtyard. So, if the client or a future owner wished to integrate the ADU and its outdoor areas to serve the main residence, only minimal effort would be required.

### Giving Trees

No matter what the peculiarities of program, designing urban houses is always a dance of privacy and propinquity, further complicated by haphazard lot configurations. “East Austin is full of unique conditions of lots—ones with different sizes and geometries,” Matt explains. “The area was developed before municipal jurisdiction over

construction. Some lots that are grandfathered are considered too small to build on. Our challenge was to optimize this lot on the main street and the alley and determine for the client whether the trees were an asset or a liability.”

As it turns out, the trees were a major asset, not only for their natural properties as summer shading for the house, but also as catalysts for breaking



*This page and opposite:* The main house aspires to an easygoing cabin aesthetic, with a common living, dining, and kitchen space organized around a central hearth. Concrete floors are lightened by warm wood ceilings, and clerestory windows pull in natural light, while preserving privacy from the neighbors.



*This page and opposite:* The client requested spaces that open onto outdoor areas at every opportunity. A deck off the kitchen leads to the backyard and an accessory dwelling beyond.

**“We pride ourselves on being nimble. Ultimately, we are problem solvers.”**

—Matt Fajkus, AIA

the street grid of rigid, boxlike buildings. The name “Hewn House” comes from the idea of a mundane block of wood sculpted into something more artful and compelling. Clad in knotty, tongue-and-groove cedar—a common material in Austin, according to Sarah, and one that satisfied the cabin-loving client—the house appears carved into its dynamic, faceted shape.

“Without the trees, the house would have had a regular rectangular plan, like a simple cabin,” Sarah explains. “But we had to sort of fracture that base rectangular plan into planes that pass by each other. Where the house

and pergola meet, the angles reflect the remnants of punching those two parts past each other.”

“The tree canopies work in our favor,” Matt continues. “They blossom in summer for shade, and shed in winter to let in light.” With their sun control in the mix, the team could eliminate some overhangs and focus on articulating the façade with subtle material changes and plan elements that are legible in elevation.

Although many homes in the area are single story, the density of the program here meant adding a partial second story. Those two extra bedrooms are located up, sharing a bath between them. The front guest bedroom opens to a balcony, creating a punch-out that lightens the street façade. That balcony segues into the stair hall, as the front elevation pulls back from a majestic existing tree.







“We came to the massing early on,” says Sarah. “And then we went through a number of different alignments of windows. Ultimately, we came back to a regular alignment, with openings stacked above one another. But the elevations were lacking a little bit of interest and movement. So we placed those strips of charred cedar between the windows to shake up the way the alignments were connecting. They make the openings seem larger than they actually are.”

### Cabin Chameleon

To complete the urban cabin theme, the team worked in the large chimney. Clad in iron spot brick, which glistens from integral iron salts, the chimney is a focal point on the street façade and the great room interior. It pierces the canted roofline of the central living space with a jaunty, almost midcentury modern demeanor. Inside, the brick spreads out from the chimney to form a long, elevated hearth, flanked by large window openings.

*This page:* In an unusual move that facilitates the overall program, the master bedroom occupies the street-facing front of the house. The master bathroom opens onto a south-facing outdoor shower at the back of the house. And the powder room acquires southern daylight through a clerestory window.

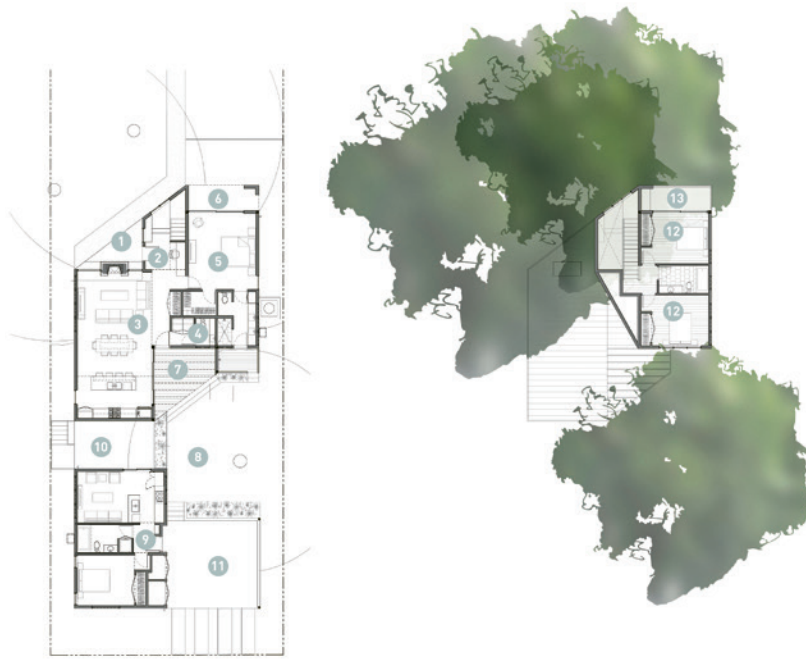
# HEWN HOUSE



Completion: 2019  
Location: Austin, Texas

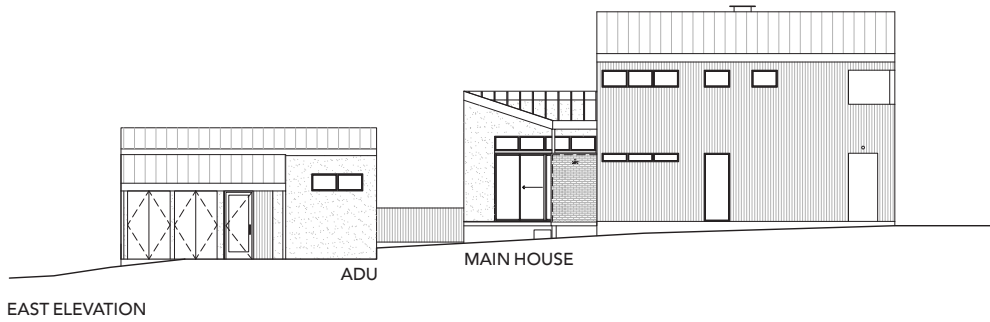
Lot Size: 6,299 SQF (0.145 ACRES)  
Gross Floor Area: 2,509 SQF  
Bedrooms: 4  
Bathrooms: 3 FULL, 1 HALF

- 1 FRONT PORTCH
- 2 ENTRY
- 3 LIVING/DINING/KITCHEN
- 4 POWDER ROOM + LAUNDRY
- 5 MASTER SUITE
- 6 MASTER PATIO
- 7 PARTIALLY-COVERED DECK
- 8 BACKYARD
- 9 ADU
- 10 ADU COURTYARD
- 11 CARPORT
- 12 BEDROOM
- 13 BALCONY

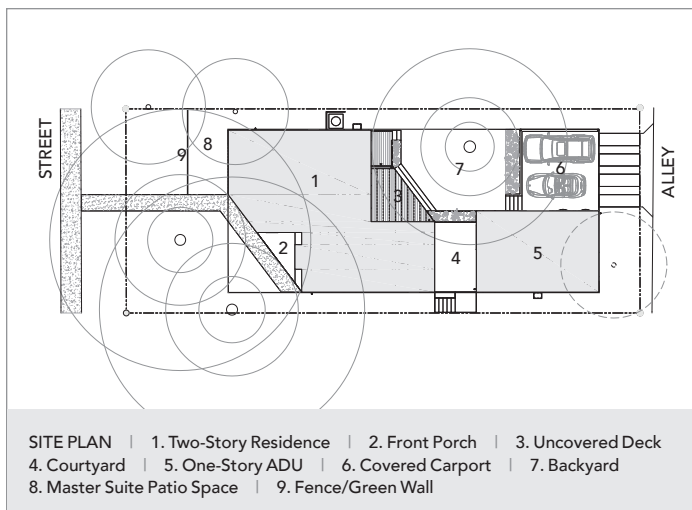


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

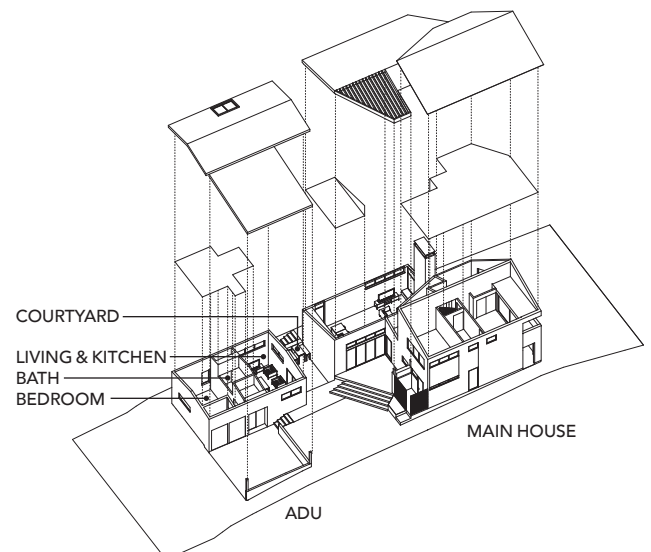
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



EAST ELEVATION



SITE PLAN | 1. Two-Story Residence | 2. Front Porch | 3. Uncovered Deck  
4. Courtyard | 5. One-Story ADU | 6. Covered Carport | 7. Backyard  
8. Master Suite Patio Space | 9. Fence/Green Wall







Encouraged by the client to design a simple, cozy space, the architects kept the great room to a reasonable size and height. To eliminate the need for single-use hallway space, circulation is kept to the edge of the room and aligns with the front entry and master bedroom wing.

Floors in the great room are concrete for vacation-home ease of living, but the ceiling is warmed by wood. Clerestories bring light in from the sides, while preserving privacy from neighbors. A sliding door system connects to an adjacent south-facing terrace, partially shaded by a pergola and a large cedar elm tree.

The floor plan is optimized for

one-level living, with all key rooms opening to outdoor space, including the master suite at the front of the house. Even the master bathroom opens to the outdoors and a private, al fresco shower bathed in south sun.

A small lot, a complex program of multiple structures, and a collection of handsome, mature trees—these are the intriguing and challenging ingredients of custom urban houses. Matt’s firm loves this kind of work, in addition to large-scale commercial projects and small-scale sculptural installations. “We pride ourselves on being nimble,” he says. “The larger idea is that, ultimately, we are problem solvers.”  
—S. Claire Conroy

## Hewn House

Austin, Texas

**ARCHITECT:** Matt Fajkus, principal in charge; Sarah Wassel, project manager; David Birt; Matt Fajkus Architecture, Austin

**BUILDER:** Capstone Custom Homes, Dripping Springs, Texas

**PROJECT SIZE:** 2,509 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.145 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Charles Davis Smith, FAIA

### KEY PRODUCTS

**BATHROOM VENTILATION:** Broan

**CLADDING:** Western red cedar; knotted cedar; stucco

**COUNTERS:** Tectura Designs terrazzo; custom mesquite butcher block

**DECKING:** Western red cedar

**DOOR HARDWARE:** Baldwin Hardware

**FAUCETS:** Hansgrohe (powder room); California Faucets (kitchen)

**FIREPLACE:** Acme iron spot bricks

**HVAC:** Carrier

**KITCHEN APPLIANCES:** KitchenAid

**PAINT:** Sherwin-Williams (interior)

**ROOFING:** Standing seam metal  
**ROOF WINDOWS:** VELUX (ADU bathroom)

**SINKS:** Blanco SILGRANIT (kitchen); Lacava (powder room)

**WINDOWS:** Milgard (picture windows)

**WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS:** Western Window Systems

*This page and opposite:* Pitched roofs are the neighborhood norm, so the team abstracted the forms on both the two-story and one-story volumes. Over the deck, the roof morphs into a shading pergola.



## Koser II

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IOWA CITY, IOWA  
NEUMANN MONSON ARCHITECTS





**When Neumann Monson president**

Tim Schroeder, AIA, and his wife found themselves with an emptying nest, they decided it was time to move from the Iowa City suburbs to a closer-in, walkable neighborhood. They were already veterans of a half-dozen do-it-yourself renovations, so they weren't intimidated by fixer-uppers. They found the perfect

opportunity with a midcentury modern house, walking distance from the university hospital system and just across the river from the city itself.

Koser I, as the project was dubbed, was succumbing to its years of neglect. Tim and his wife brought the house back to life as a carbon-neutral home for their family, complete with

geothermal climate control and photovoltaic mechanicals. Their interest in carbon neutrality was part of an evolution in lifestyle that also included shifting to a plant-based diet, driving an electric car, and exploring how they could connect more closely to the outdoors and the natural environment. The renovation offered a personal and



*This page:* Located behind a fence at the front of the house, a private patio allows filtered light into the kitchen, while blocking views from passersby on the street.

professional challenge for Tim. “The goal with Koser I was to see how close to zero-energy I could get in a retrofit,” he recalls. “So I could take that knowledge to the firm’s clients.”

Their work on Koser I, completed in 2016, so impressed the neighbors that Tim began to get suggestions about other houses to resurrect. One was just across the street. It was in even worse shape than Koser I had been, and it was devoid of any midcentury charm. Nonetheless, Tim decided to take it on as a speculative project called, naturally, Koser II.

The “new” project house “had no redeeming qualities,” he says. “It had a hipped roof, 7-foot eaves, and 7-foot-8-inch ceilings. I looked at how we could gain some volume inside, and it just wasn’t there. So we just cleared it off and built on the foundation. We had a plan to achieve a house that we could sell at least at a break-even.”



*This page:* The central living, dining, and kitchen opens onto a courtyard and pool. An elevated gel fireplace can be seen from multiple areas in the room. The kitchen, streamlined with built-in appliances, blends into the room discreetly. Geothermal-fed radiant heating takes the edge off concrete floors.

But along the way, he and his wife fell in love with the new project. They added a pool to the scheme and began to develop the property into a true indoor-outdoor oasis that also hit state-of-the-art benchmarks for building performance. “It gave us an opportunity to do something that was more of our style,” says Tim. “We tried our best to create a sanctuary—an introverted house that focuses on the courtyard in back.”

The original house was L-shaped, leaving a foundation that Tim could add a “third leg” to and complete the U-shape of a courtyard house. The new pool occupies the center of the court-

yard. “As you circulate around the plan, it feels like it has a heart,” he observes. Although the pool season is short in Iowa, the moving, glistening water contributes to the experience of living in the house all year-round.

“The shades over the pool also shudder in the wind,” says Tim, “giving the courtyard a dynamic, kinetic feel. When I was studying in Italy, I visited the pope’s summer home. They had fabric shades there and I thought they were the coolest thing. On our house, they extend the living room when they’re open, because it feels like the ceiling plane continues outdoors.”

The central living/dining/kitchen





This page: Retractable shades extend the sense of the home's protected perimeter to the courtyard and pool area.

**“As you circulate around the plan, it feels like it has a heart.”**

—Tim Schroeder, AIA

core benefits most from the courtyard, opening to it with floor-to-ceiling windows and doors. Although the room parallels the street as well, it's visually protected by a front-facing patio and privacy wall. Windows directly facing the street are elevated to clerestory height.

A “children’s wing,” optimized for future generations in tow, occupies the short spoke of the old L foundation.

The two bedrooms are self-contained, each with its own en-suite bathroom and closet.

The master bedroom wing makes use of the new footprint, excavated to create a partial lower level. Not only does the lower level lend a little elbow room to the plan—a den, extra guest room and bath, and utility room—it’s a reassuring refuge in tornado country. Above it, the master bedroom is elevated by a few steps to gain a bit more daylight and a different variation on the courtyard view. A Juliet balcony overlooks the pool. “Elevating the master gives it a bit more presence,” says Tim.

### Skin Deep

The introverted plan expresses at building skin level with variations in cladding material. Darker, rougher cedar shakes characterize the public face of the house, while lighter cedar siding covers the internal or protected areas of the elevations.

“The dark cedar shake forms an outer crust,” Tim explains. “Where there’s a garden at the front of the house, that represents the skin being pulled away, so there’s smooth natural cedar there. It’s private and secluded. And because the back courtyard is cut out of the floor plan, the building is smooth cedar to express that interiority.”



*This page:* The insular house defines private areas of the elevation with untreated, smooth cedar siding. Areas that face directly onto the street or toward neighbors receive an “outer crust” of rougher, dark cedar shakes.



The rear walls return to the dark cedar shake as they terminate the bedroom wings.

The interiors are simple—indeed, almost spartan—befitting an architect’s refuge. The main living core has radiant concrete floors, built-in Miele appliances that all but disappear, and a serene gel fireplace set at eye level adjacent to the dining area.

Bedrooms are ample, but not profligate.

Behind the walls, in the ground, and on the roof lie the home’s zero-energy features. A rigid insulation shell with foamed-in-place insulation gets the walls to R-24 and the roof to R-40. “The walls are closed cell and there’s

an inch of continuous insulation on the outboard side of the structure; the roof is open cell with 1½-inch, fully adhered insulation. And the roof slopes south for the photovoltaics,” he says.

“Probably the most difficult task was getting those headers up into the roof, because it was very important for me to get the glass all the way to the ceiling,” he continues. All the

glass is double-glazed and low-E.

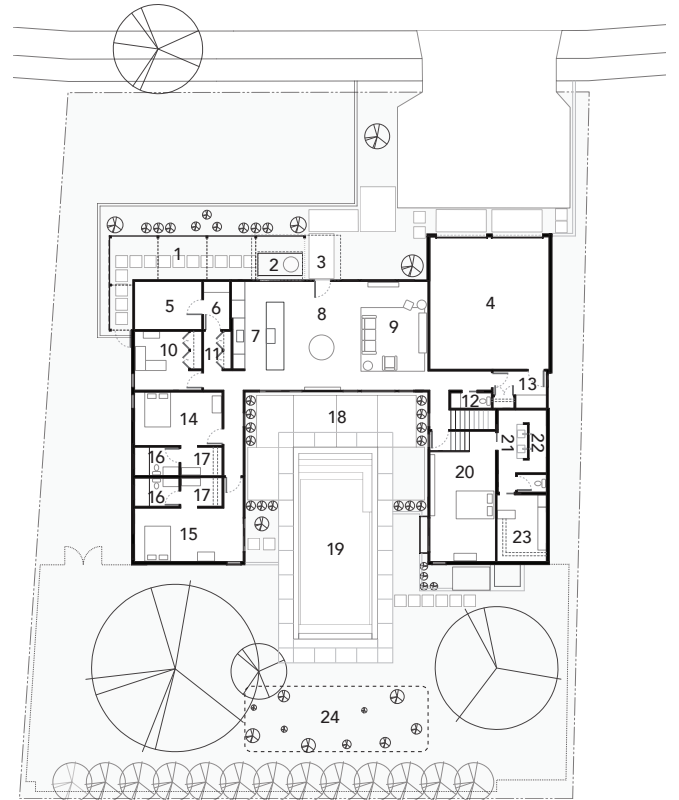
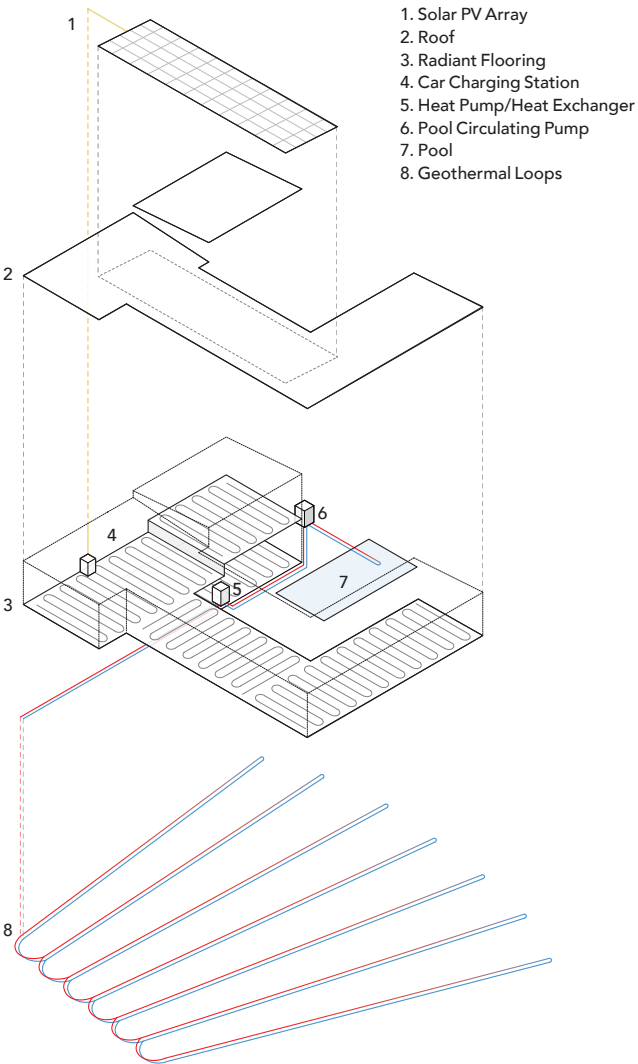
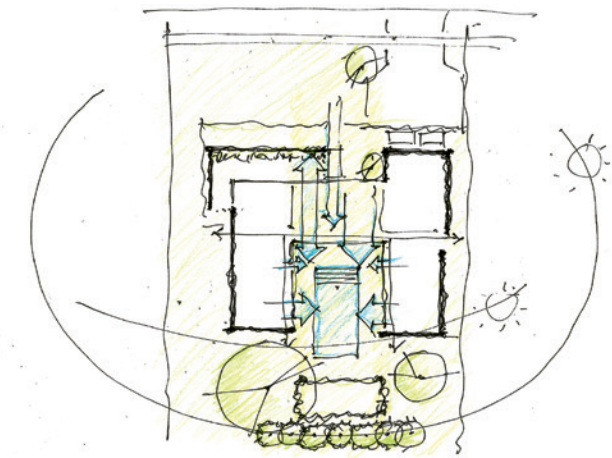
A topping slab over the old foundation received insulation, too, and radiant heat. Climate control is powered by a geothermal system. “It’s a water-to-water system for radiant heat and water-to-air for the air condition-

The house covers its own needs and then some, often sending power back to the grid.

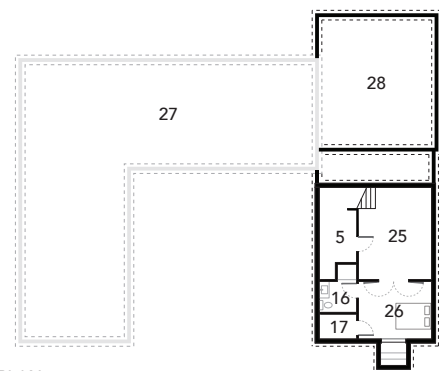


*This page:* The new house reused the teardown’s L-shaped foundation. The master bedroom and master bath occupy a new wing that completes the U-shape of the courtyard house. The addition allowed Tim to squeeze in a partial lower level for storm protection and added family and guest space.





GROUND LEVEL PLAN



LOWER LEVEL PLAN

- 1. Herb Garden | 2. Outdoor Garden | 3. Entry | 4. Garage
- 5. Utility | 6. Laundry | 7. Kitchen | 8. Dining | 9. Living | 10. Office
- 11. Pantry | 12. Guest Bath | 13. Transition | 14. Suite 1 | 15. Suite 2
- 16. Bath | 17. Closet | 18. Courtyard Patio | 19. Pool | 20. Master
- 21. Master Bath | 22. Master Shower | 23. Master Closet | 24. Rain Garden
- 25. Den | 26. Suite 3 | 27. Existing Footprint (Unexcavated)
- 28. Unexcavated



ing. In the summer, we reject the heat from the cooling process into the pool. It helps the system run more efficiently,” says Tim. A 10.08k PV array feeds the mechanical systems, the car charger, LED lighting, and the Energy Star appliances. Water runoff from the roof

and deck directs to a “rain garden” at the rear of the property. All told, the house covers its own needs and then some, often sending power back to the Iowa grid.

It’s doubtful Tim’s neighbors could have predicted how much his steward-

ship of this close-in property would contribute to the fabric of their neighborhood. And how little it would take away from the environment in the process. Odds are, he’ll find them knocking at the door again soon—with another property to transform. —*S. Claire Conroy*





Sitting atop a partial lower level, the new master bedroom wing is elevated above the rest of the house, capturing additional natural light and enlivening the rear elevation.

## Koser II

Iowa City, Iowa

**ARCHITECT:** Tim Schroeder, AIA, Principal, Neumann Monson Architects, Iowa

**BUILDER:** Smith & Wood Construction, Iowa City

**PROJECT SIZE:** 2,850 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** .275 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$213 a square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Cameron Campbell Integrated Studio

### KEY PRODUCTS

**BATHROOM FAUCETS:** Brizio (master), Kohler (secondary)

**BATHROOM HARDWARE:** Delta

**BATHROOM MIRRORS:** Elio LOOK LED backlit mirrors

**CABINETRY:** Dura Supreme Bria

**CABINETRY HARDWARE:** Top Knobs

**CEILING FANS:** Modern Fan Company

**CLADDING:** Ecoshel Ventilated Rainscreen Cedar Shingles

**COUNTERS:** DuPont Zodiaq

**DOOR HARDWARE:** Emtek Helios

**DRYWALL:** USG

**FIREPLACE:** Ignis Products

**GARAGE DOORS:** Overhead Door Thermacore

**HVAC:** Bosch water-to-water and water-to-air heat pumps; horizontally bored geothermal loop

**INSULATION:** ZIP System R-Sheathing

**KITCHEN APPLIANCES:** Miele

**KITCHEN FAUCET:** Blanco

**LIGHTING:** Tivoli Lighting Tivo, Bega (exterior); Zumtobel (dining), Vode (kitchen)

**LIGHTING CONTROL/HOME CONTROL/WINDOW SHADE CONTROL:** Lutron

**PAINTS:** Sherwin-Williams

**PHOTOVOLTAICS:** Moxie Solar

**ROOF TRUSS SYSTEM:** Weyerhaeuser TJI Joists

**ROOFING:** TPO

**SECURITY SYSTEM:** Honeywell

**SHADING:** CableShade (courtyard)

**TILE:** Daltile, Kate-Lo Tile & Stone

**TOILETS:** Kohler

**UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING:** ZIP System R-Sheathing

**VANITIES/LAVS:** Kohler Verticyl (suite baths); Kohler VOX (master)

**VENTILATION:** Panasonic WhisperGreen Select

**WASHER/DRYER:** Maytag

**WINDOWS:** Quaker H600 Series

# Park Slope Townhouse

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK  
RESOLUTION: 4 ARCHITECTURE



**Park Slope is a world** of leafy streets lined with brick and brownstone townhouses, often with rounded bays and high stoops. Most were built near the turn of the 20th century and have been lovingly updated over the decades by young families migrating from Manhattan. But here and there are wood-clad houses that are falling apart.

About 10 years ago, architect Joseph Tanney's clients acquired one of those teardowns. Sandwiched between a large apartment building and smaller-scale row houses, it was leaning and you could step through the floors, says Joe. The couple, childless at the time, are both artists and needed only about 1,000 square feet of living space. However, zoning allowed for 5,000 square feet, which is what they ended up with when the house was completed in 2017. "It's what one does in New York City to maximize the value of the property," Joe says.

New York City-based Res4 Architecture is nationally known for its modern, prefabricated houses that aim to improve the way construction is delivered. This project was originally conceived that way, but the modular approach never materialized. When it was first being sketched in 2010, few factories were set up to execute steel framing at that scale. "They were focused on projects 25,000 square feet and up," Joe says. His factory sources have evolved since







*This page and opposite:* Owned by artists, the Brooklyn townhouse is replete with custom flourishes, including the built-in banquette fabricated on-site from ¼-inch-thick Corian over a plywood shell.

then, though. “Now we are building a modular house out of steel in the Brooklyn Navy Yard,” he says.

With tight neighbors and narrow lots, urban building is predictably difficult, and this case was no different. Trouble began during demolition with the discovery that the wood house next door was leaning 9 inches over the property line. What’s more, the neighbor had appropriated that space by building a TV niche on the lower level. “It took a while to resolve,” Joe says. “We told the neighbor we needed to reclaim the space to build our walls. I think the clients bought him a big TV.”

### 3D Collage

The new five-story townhouse responds to their request for abundant natural light and a strong connection to the outdoors—and the arrival of two sons born during the project’s five-year duration from demolition to completion. Clad in brick, cedar rainscreens, and black aluminum panels, it is respectful of the neighbors. The front façade steps back to align with the other townhouses on the block (the deeply set-back wood house next door is an anomaly), while the protruding three-story cedar volume acknowledges the apartment-house bay on the west.

Comprising 1,000 square feet on each floor, the house forms a fascinating collage in plan and section. The ground level contains a garage and mudroom, guest bedroom and bath, and a playroom that opens to the backyard. Pedestrians climb the wide brick block stoop and step into the foyer, where a wood-and-steel staircase supplies a modern interpretation of the classic townhouse typology. “Wherever the stoop is, that 4-to-8-foot zone pulls all the way through the house,” Joe says.

Elegant and logical, the interiors shift sectionally as one moves up through the house. On the first floor



*This page and opposite:* With its Escher-like maze of sunken levels, mezzanines, terraces, and overlooks, the house draws in abundant natural light. The stairwell's stack effect couples with top-level sliding doors to ventilate the home naturally.



is the social nucleus: an eat-in kitchen flanked by a dining area and a sunken living room, which rises to double height. The mezzanine above holds a movie pod cantilevered over the living room, an enclosed corner office, and a private balcony wrapped in cedar slats. Upstairs are the boys' bedrooms and the master suite and rear balcony, and on top is an art studio opening to north and south ipe decks. During the design, the clients added an elevator, rooftop vegetable garden and Jacuzzi, and a solar canopy that shades the art studio's south terrace.

While the typical brownstone is inward-looking, this one maximizes light and air. The stairwell and many operable windows create a stack effect as warm air escapes through large sliding glass doors on the top floor. With its glass railings and open treads made of Parallam-strand lumber, the staircase provides through-views to the terraces on each floor, connecting occupants to the world beyond. It also acts as a light shaft. Past the third-floor landing, a wall of frosted glass in the master bath softly illuminates the stairwell. "The clients requested a skylight in their





shower,” Joe says. “One way to do that was to push that piece out to allow light from above.” Top-floor terraces also funnel light into the 14-gauge hot-rolled steel staircase. “The black steel is dark, yet reflects light,” Joe says. “Its color and intensity changes over the day relative to the light.”

While the typical brownstone is inward-looking, this one maximizes light and air.

#### Interior Landscape

Other important details add to the experience of family-friendly living. In the bay on the main floor, a built-in sofa makes a strong connection to the street. A saltwater aquarium divides the kitchen and living room, where a custom teak sofa wraps three sides. Behind it, a wall of teak cabinetry stitches together the kitchen and living room and stretches up to the mezzanine “mosh pit,” as Joe calls it. In this plush spot, the family watches movies on a projector screen. It drops down from high on the opposite wall, where blackened steel shelving holds media equipment and a fireplace.

The cocoon-like movie pod was one of several interior elements that were redesigned for functionality and to balance the budget. The original concept of an egg-shaped fiberglass mold proved too expensive to build, so the teak millwork was extended upward to



*This page:* Hovering above the double-height living room, the movie “pod” contains built-in speakers and a projector that sends images to a drop-down screen above the fireplace.





*This page:* Sliding screens on the second-floor mezzanine allow the office to close off from family activity or join in the hubbub.

create a C-shaped space with a built-in speaker and projector, says project architect Jessica Wilcock. During construction, the team also worked with a series of Corian fabricators to figure out the most economical way to build the circular banquette that flows out of the kitchen island—a central feature. “Heat-setting the Corian off-site was very expensive, so we found someone willing to use thinner Corian, a quarter-inch thick, and form it on-site over a shell that a millworker made out of framing and plywood,” she says. “That offered a pretty large cost saving.”

The green and blue palette—charreuse sofa and chairs, blue leather for the banquette—“talks to the aquarium.” Says Jessica, “The clients were constantly doing research and introducing playful, fun elements, like the

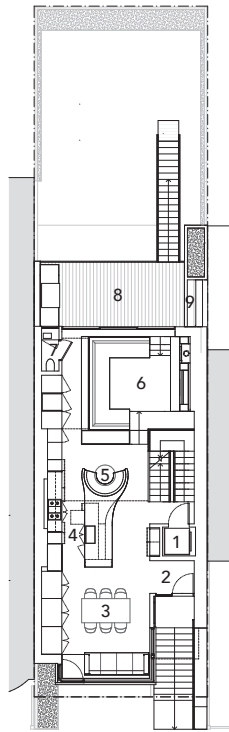


*This page* : The master suite and childrens’ bedrooms are on the fourth level of the five-level townhouse, but there’s an elevator for when the climb feels daunting.

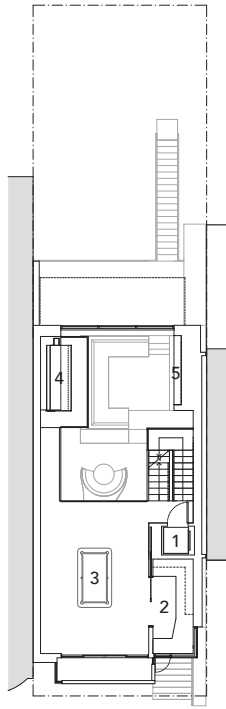




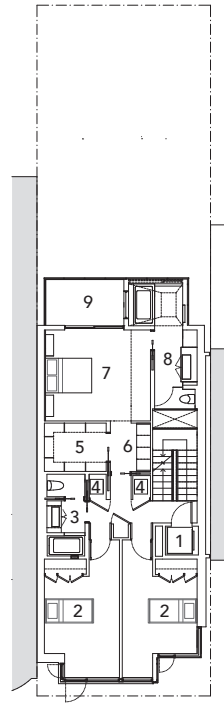
- GARDEN LEVEL**
1. Elevator
  2. Garage
  3. Mechanical Room
  4. Aquarium Equipment Room
  5. Mudroom Entry
  6. Laundry Room
  7. Guest Bath
  8. Guest Bedroom
  9. Playroom
  10. Rear Patio
  11. Turf Yard
  12. Bamboo Planters



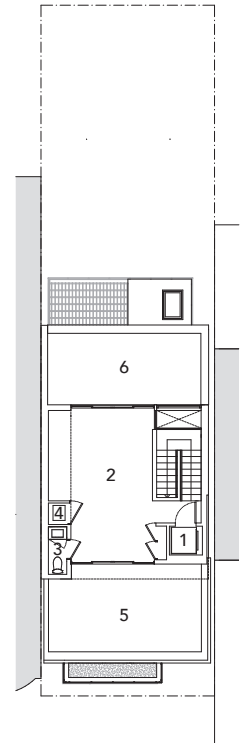
- FIRST FLOOR**
1. Elevator
  2. Entry
  3. Dining
  4. Kitchen
  5. Island Banquette
  6. Living
  7. Powder Room
  8. Dining Terrace
  9. Water Wall Feature



- SECOND FLOOR**
1. Elevator
  2. Office
  3. Mezzanine
  4. Movie Pod
  5. Projector Screen



- THIRD FLOOR**
1. Elevator
  2. Kids Bedroom
  3. Kids Bath
  4. Mechanical Closet
  5. Master Closet
  6. Master Dresser
  7. Master Bedroom
  8. Master Bath
  9. Master Balcony



- LOFT FLOOR**
1. Elevator
  2. Art Studio
  3. Powder Room
  4. Mechanical Closet
  5. Front Terrace
  6. Rear Terrace

SECTION PERSPECTIVE



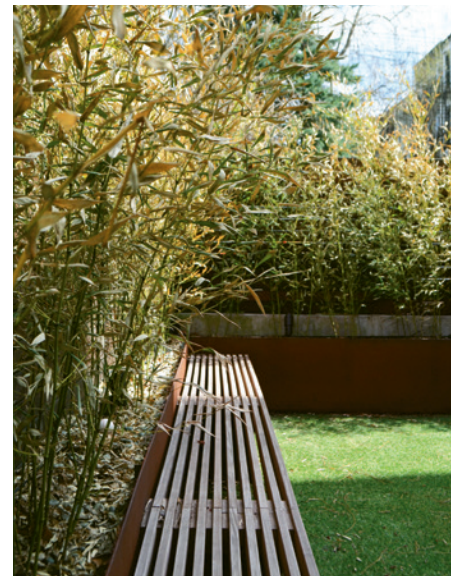


saltwater aquarium. Originally it was designed as a pure glass volume with lighting inside, but we made a solid piece to hide the pipes, which run down to an equipment room on the lower level, and a top access panel for feeding and cleaning.”

Res4 created a cozy interior where the family enjoys gathering, plus a maintenance-free, tile-turf lawn where the kids can play ball even in the heart of the city. “The clients entertain quite a bit,” Joe says. “The kids and their cousins, kindergarteners, attend the school where my wife teaches. Some of the teachers overheard the cousins talking about a house with an aquarium in the middle, and they went on and on about the stair and the movie pod. It was funny to hear the cousins of these kids talking about how amazing the house is.” With its memorable amenities, striking street presence, and view out, the house provides a wide range of experiences in one urban-friendly package. RD



*This page:* The hardworking ground level houses garage, guest quarters, kids’ playroom with access to a turfed backyard, mudroom, and laundry facilities.



## Park Slope Townhouse

Brooklyn, New York

**ARCHITECT:** Principals-in-charge Joseph Tanney, AIA, and Robert Luntz, AIA; project architects Colin Murtaugh, AIA; Terrence Seah; Jessica Wilcock, Resolution: 4 Architecture, New York

**BUILDER:** Professional Grade Construction, Brooklyn, New York

**PROJECT SIZE:** 5,000 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.06 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Eric Soltan and Resolution: 4 Architecture

### KEY PRODUCTS:

**CLADDING:** Omega-Lite Aluminum Panels, EIFS

**COUNTERTOPS:** DuPont Corian

**COOKTOP:** Wolf

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**DISPOSAL:** Insinkerator

**DOORS:** Accurate, Grant

**ELEVATOR:** Handi-Lift

**ENTRY DOOR HARDWARE:** Schlage

**FAUCETS:** Hansgrohe, Speakman

**FIREPLACE:** Wittus

**FLOORING:** Graf Brothers Flooring engineered wood

**HVAC:** Carrier

**LIGHTING:** Juno

**LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS:** Lutron

**OVENS:** Wolf

**PAINTS/STAINS:** Benjamin Moore

**PHOTOVOLTAICS:** SolarOne Solutions

**RANGE:** Wolf

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**SECURITY SYSTEMS:** Alarms R Us, Honeywell

**SINKS:** Blanco Precision Microedge, WETSTYLE, Kohler

**SKYLIGHTS:** Wasco (VELUX Commercial)

**TOILETS:** TOTO

**TUBS:** Zuma

**TURF TILES:** Edel Grass

**UNDERLAYMENT:** Densglass sheathing

**VENT HOOD:** Miele

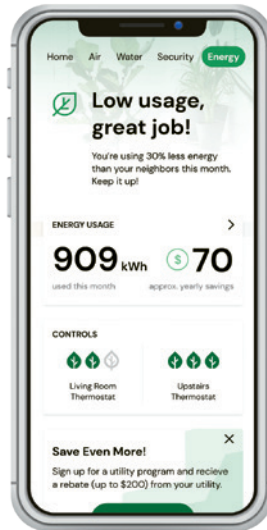
**WASHER/DRYER:** LG

**WINDOW WALL SYSTEM:** NanaWall

# Fresh Starts



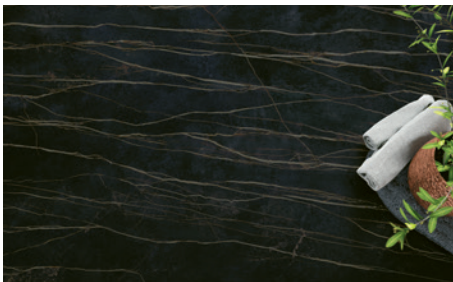
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2



3



4



## 1. IN SINK

The 48-inch-wide Zaca wall-mount vanity offers an elegant ADA-compliant solution for high-end homes and commercial applications. Combine the stainless steel fixture with NativeStone trough sinks from Native Trails. [Nativetrailshome.com](http://Nativetrailshome.com)  
Circle 101 on inquiry card.

## 2. HOME ECONOMICS

The next generation of home monitoring solutions is upon us. Over the next year, Resideo will phase in various integrations for its app to assess water management, energy services, air quality, appliances, and security. [Resideo.com](http://Resideo.com)  
Circle 102 on inquiry card.

## 3. LA VIE EN ROSE

Striking a note of optimism, Benjamin Moore has chosen “First Light” to launch the first year of the new decade. The color represents “a new dawn of idealism, design, and living,” says Andrea Magno, director of color marketing and development. [Benjaminmoore.com](http://Benjaminmoore.com)  
Circle 103 on inquiry card.

## 4. COUNTER TREND

Crossville’s new porcelain slab counter material, backed with fiberglass for extra stability and ease of cutting, resists multiple forces of degradation, making it well suited to interior and exterior applications. Slabs measure 1,620mm by 3,240mm and are 12mm thick. [Crossvilleinc.com](http://Crossvilleinc.com)  
Circle 104 on inquiry card.



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Photo: IMG\_JNK



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### 5. NEW YEAR'S BLUE

Pantone's more pensive, moody color of the year, Classic Blue (also known as PANTONE 19-4052), finds expression in New Ravenna's jewel glass mosaics, designed for interior and exterior walls and floors.

[Newravenna.com](http://Newravenna.com)

Circle 105 on inquiry card.

### 6. INTO THE WOODS

Tired of the same old array of metals for handles and pulls? Designer Door's Monte Timber collection shakes up the category with American white oak and black walnut hardwood styles.

[Designerdoorware.com](http://Designerdoorware.com)

Circle 106 on inquiry card.

### 7. OPENING ACT

Hope's Jamestown 175 Series pivot doors are tested and certified for use in hurricane and impact zones. The hot-rolled steel, single-panel doors are 6 feet wide and 11 feet tall, and coated with the company's "Power of 5" finishing system.

[Hopeswindows.com](http://Hopeswindows.com)

Circle 107 on inquiry card.

### 8. BIG SPLASH

Large-format showerheads are here to stay, and when they look like the new Ultra-Thin Rectangular Rain and Waterfall unit from California Faucets, that's no hardship. The solid-brass showerhead measures an ample 13 inches by 20 inches. Other styles, sizes, finishes are available.

[Californiafaucets.com](http://Californiafaucets.com)

Circle 108 on inquiry card.



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**9. RICE IS NICE**

CalPlant, a new MDF manufacturing facility, is scheduled to launch production early this year. Based in Willow, California, the plant will produce formaldehyde-free MDF panels from rice straw. Calplant1.com  
Circle 109 on inquiry card.

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**10. AFICIONADO BOOKENDS**

Liebherr's WS 1200 wine chiller and XS 200 humididor offer a myriad of high-performance features in units just under 25 inches high and 17 inches wide. Liebherr.com  
Circle 110 on inquiry card.

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# Cape Crusaders

ROBERT M. CAIN ARCHITECT  
ATLANTA

Atlanta is a rare American large city where close-in locations remain fairly affordable. This has encouraged younger buyers to invest in neglected neighborhoods where older period houses languish untouched. Not all buyers are kind to these original houses, however, choosing instead to impose imported sensibilities upon the existing fabric. Such was not the case with the young family who approached Robert M. Cain Architect with a sweet old Cape Cod and compelling program.

Located on an eighth of an acre in the city's Old Fourth Ward section, this particular Cape Cod had a mere 825 square feet of living space—all on one floor. Not enough space by today's standards, especially in a culture where working from home is increasingly common. "They loved the charm of their post-war house," Bob Cain recalls, "but it just wasn't big enough."

So the team set about devising a renovation and additions that would optimize the house for modern life, while preserving the Cape's essential character and its relationship to the street. "We like to underline the characteristics, rather than fighting them," says Bob. A cobbled-on front porch, therefore, is replaced by a clean deck that showcases the simple lines of the original building. Space inside the old house will be renovated and reassigned. And a new two-story addition at the back will stand off from the old building, and contain a new kitchen, dining area, and screened porch, with bedrooms upstairs. An accessory building will provide more office space, a guest suite, and parking. —*S. Claire Conroy*



Project: Urbane Revival, Atlanta; architect: Robert M. Cain, FAIA, principal; Carmen Stan, AIA, project architect; Drew Bell, staff architect, Robert M. Cain Architect, Atlanta; project size: 2,725 square feet (825 renovated; 1,900 new additions); site size: .125 acre; illustrations: Robert M. Cain Architect.

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