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RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

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OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 2, 2025

## City Sights



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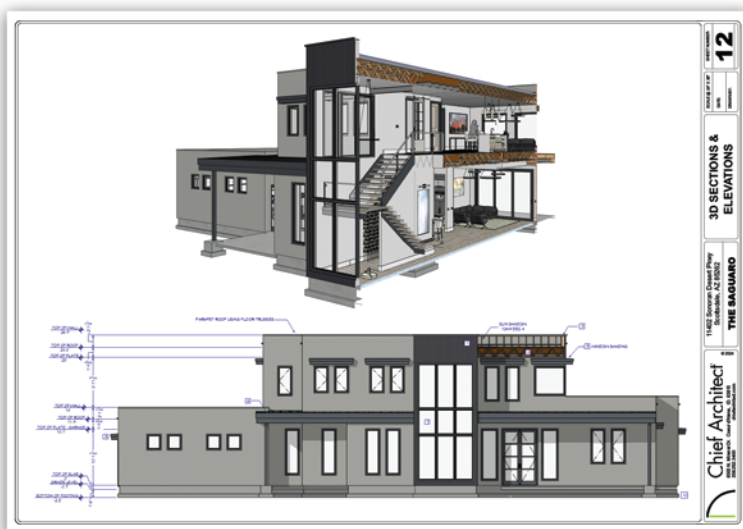


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RESIDENTIAL DESIGN



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On the Cover: Courtyard House by Shipley Architects. Photo: Robert Tsai.





Welcome to Volume 2, 2025, of *Residential Design* magazine. We are the only national professional publication devoted to residential architects and custom builders. We're dedicated to providing you with expert insight and substantive information on high-end residential design and construction.

Our print edition is published every other month. And our newsletter is published twice a month. If you are not already a subscriber and would like to be, please go online to: [ResidentialDesignMagazine.com/subscribe](http://ResidentialDesignMagazine.com/subscribe).

If you have an exceptional single-family residential project you'd like us to write about, or an interesting and instructive business story you'd like to share with other professionals, please email [Claire@SOLAbRANDS.com](mailto:Claire@SOLAbRANDS.com).

We look forward to having you join our *Residential Design* community.

# RD

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## Tales of the City



**What is an urban house?** That's a question we ask with vigor and confusion every year, when we put together this annual city issue and when our jury parses our design competition entries. We have a dedicated RDAA category for Custom Urban Houses, and no two projects are ever alike. Some look like they could be in a verdant countryside because they're sited on a decent-sized lot. Others look like the owners could pass the salt to their neighbor.

So we define urban broadly to mean within city limits, because anything more restrictive is also reductive. We think it's best to see more, not less—more situations, more ideas, and more solutions. In this issue, you'll encounter everything from single-family new builds to apartment renovations. Each one tackles the toughest problem that city living entails: How do you carve out areas of privacy while securing natural light and views?

One old trick is the courtyard plan, and you'll see variations in a house by Brooks + Scarpa and our cover project by Shipley Architects. Courtyard houses turn themselves outside in to maximize private outdoor space. Located in Manhattan Beach, California, the Brooks + Scarpa house employs custom metal screening to preserve openness and natural light, while shielding more personal areas from onlookers. The Shipley Architects' house in Dallas also makes use of screening, but it's made of brick—in keeping with regional tradition.

Apartments share some of the same challenges—gathering light, chief among them. But with this building type, it's a game of inches, not feet. When architect David Haresign, FAIA, and his wife decided to downsize from their longtime single-family home, David was acutely aware of what lay ahead. His firm, Bonstra | Haresign, is expert at puzzling multifamily projects. For his own duplex in Washington, D.C., function, flow, and form were David's paramount concerns.

When he first submitted the project to me, I pondered the wisdom of downsizing to an apartment on two levels. But that problem was solved from the start: there's access to the central elevator banks at each level and they're on the quiet top two floors of the building. Meanwhile, climbing steps is great exercise, no doubt.

Although I lived in D.C. for most of my life, I did not immediately recognize David's building. It's called The Woodward, a common name in the city developed in part by Samuel Woodward. Well, as it turns out, the building is directly next door to my first apartment as a working adult. I loved my urban life back then, especially in that neighborhood with its rare mix of handsome midrise apartment buildings, townhouses, and stately city homes—all within easy walking distance of restaurants, parks, and small shops. It was and remains my ideal of in-city living.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

S. Claire Conroy  
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# The Stories We Build

BY MARISA KAUGARS, ASSOC. AIA

A few weeks ago, I led a Lunch & Learn session on theatrical storytelling techniques and their potential usefulness in architecture. My path to (hopefully) becoming a residential architect has not been a linear one. A passion for theater led to an MFA in stage design before I returned to residential architecture during the pandemic. I've found that the similarities between the two disciplines were surprising—and delightful.

The pace and scale of the projects and the close collaboration between client and architect mimic theatrical collaborations between director and designer. The parallels are even tighter when you consider narrative storytelling. Most theater is based on a script—a story that is being shared with an audience. I think of residential architecture in the same vein. From the macro to the micro, we ask our clients to tell us how they live. What are their dreams for the future, what is their morning routine, where do they sit down for a meal, or to read a book, or watch a movie? Why are they building a home? Their answers to these questions become the story of the project—sometimes that story is naturally poetic, and other times that story originates in the functional. In either case, the story that they share is what should guide us through the project and keep us grounded in our designs.

During graduate school, designer Christine Jones shared with us her techniques for script analysis—effectively mirroring the Pre-Design or Programming phase in architecture. Her practice includes something called a spine—an idea, sentence, paragraph, poem, or even a piece of music that evokes the essence of a story. It may come from the script itself or may be an outside piece of inspiration. I've picked up a habit of creating these spines for my residential

projects. Sometimes, they are gifted to us by the client.

For example, one of our current projects is named *Fermata*, after the musical symbol that indicates a pause of unspecified length. The definition of the word *fermata* became the spine of this project. The resulting design is about finding breath, peace, and that moment of pause. For another project, the compiled words “lighthouse sanctuary on a hill” conjure images of a refuge, a beacon, and a specific site. The resulting design is a glass-enclosed series of volumes that are shielded by vertical stone walls that cut through the hillside and screen the house from view. I return to these spines over and over during the course of design and documentation and I find that it helps to guide my decisions, while creating emotional poeticism in even the most functional of projects.

Another holdover from stage design is storyboarding. This is often the first step of any scenic design and can illuminate what a designer's impulses are for spatial relationships between characters, or for the emotional quality of a scene. As I begin to sketch ideas for Schematic Design, I often imagine a sequence of actions that my client may take. For example, if my client loves to host their friends for an afternoon, perhaps I imagine them welcoming a guest, taking their coat, and pouring a glass of wine before sitting down by the fire. I imagine the emotional experience of that sequence and, in a quick series of sketches, illustrate that experience. I consider what shapes, sequences and textures appear in the sketches and pull them forward into the design of the project.

Techniques aside, I think a lot about storytelling in my everyday practice. Humans are naturally inclined to be storytellers. We tell tales about our



Marisa Kaugars, Assoc. AIA, is a new member of AIA CRAN's Advisory Group.

days to our partners, recount events to friends and family as grand adventures, or talk about our futures as if we were heroic characters in action movies. As architects and designers, we are expert storytellers. Most of us have likely read books on how to build our businesses by telling our stories. During design, we walk our clients through our work, asking them to imagine each space as we describe it to them. In construction, we problem solve and then tell the stories of our innovative solutions to our colleagues.

Stories have a natural progression that invites others into our ideas. They entertain, bring people together, and allow us to share experiences with one another. Stories help create understanding and empathy in a world that can be unbearably cruel. The next time you sit down to think about a new project, or even how to best represent an old one, think about the story that you are telling. Perhaps you'll find a new kind of poeticism in your work, or a surprising kind of truth.

*Marisa Kaugars is a project manager at Studio MM Architect, Olivebridge, N.Y. She recently joined the AIA CRAN Advisory Group and is currently pursuing licensure in New York State.*



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## City State of Mind

STUDIO DWELL  
CHICAGO

**When Mark Peters, AIA,** of Chicago-based Studio Dwell gets a new client, he sends them a five-page questionnaire. The questions go in-depth about the spaces the client would like to have (“Should the primary suite include a separate dressing room? An exterior terrace?”), but also ask about lifestyle (“Do you read for pleasure? Are you handy at doing repairs or projects around the house?”)

“We like Modern architecture and clean lines, but when we’re designing, we really think about how people use the spaces. In my head, I’m walking through the different spaces and thinking about how they would get furnished and how to make sure



Mark Peters, AIA, of Chicago-based Studio Dwell





that they're comfortable," says Mark, whose six-person firm is devoted to elegant residential work. "The comment that we most get from clients is that their homes are very livable."

For the last 35 years, Studio Dwell has been carrying the torch for Modernist architecture in Chicago, the birthplace of the modern city. The buildings are composed of carefully detailed, classically orthogonal volumes with a strong sense of materiality. The firm designs multifamily developments and custom homes, which are mostly urban infill projects. "In the city, we're always dealing with privacy issues and having enough light," says Mark.

A staunch urbanite, Mark didn't start out that way. He grew up in the tiny town of Hartford, Wisconsin, in the 1960s, raised by practical people (his father was a housepainter and his mother was a real estate agent). His exposure to Modern architecture was via movies and TV, and occasional visits to the big city, Milwaukee. "I loved the idea that you could create this artistic thing



Bucktown Three deploys Mark's L-shape plan strategy to minimize the street elevation and maximize the protected outdoor living space. Large windows and a glass-and-steel stair convey natural light.





Concrete and glass walls indicate the public areas of House Etch, while cedar clads the bedroom level. The clients, who have a background in Latin American design, asked for a strong material palette and street presence for the house.

that people could actually inhabit,” he says, speaking with characteristically long Wisconsin vowels. “I couldn’t wait to get out of the small town.”

### Launch Pad

His ticket out was an undergraduate degree in architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which has the state’s only architecture school. Afterward, he moved to Chicago, planning to get his master’s at the University of Illinois Chicago. While he was establishing residency to qualify for in-state tuition, he took a job at Hartshorne Plunkard Architects and continued to work there part-time while attending graduate school, complementing his formal education with hands-on experience. In the late ’80s, Postmodernist provocateur Stanley Tigerman was the director of the architecture school at UIC and would bring in Peter Eisenman and other big names to teach courses. “Theory was definitely the hot thing, which didn’t match up with what I was thinking about,” says Mark. “But it was great to see and be taught by these interesting architects from around the country.”

Meanwhile, the architecture that was actually getting built in Chicago was much more conservative.

After graduating, Mark worked for Pappageorge Haymes, which did mostly residential work, for a few years. He enjoyed working with clients and helping them figure out the possibilities of a site, but felt that the designs, which emphasized traditional ornamentation, played it a little too safe. Fortunately, Mark connected with a developer who wanted to differentiate himself, and launched his own firm in 2004. Recalls Mark: “The developer discovered that there was this public desire for condominiums with clean lines and floor-to-ceiling glass, for openness and

natural light, that hadn’t been tapped into yet. And we were right on the cusp of that.”

### The Windy City

Another of the clients who bought into Mark’s vision early on had a complicated project in Chicago’s Bucktown neighborhood. The custom residence, called Bucktown Three, started out as the renovation of a traditional pitched-roof house and an addition on an adjoining lot.

It was useful to keep the original house because it had shallower setbacks







that could be grandfathered in. The design team reclad it, gave it a contemporary flat roof, and integrated it with the new addition to create a harmonious whole. The original renovation/addition was three-quarters completed when the owner purchased the lot on the other side as well. The architects took the sudden change in stride, adding a new wing and an additional outdoor space.

For the cladding, they chose brick, a traditional material found all over town, but updated it by using white brick and pairing it with white mortar. “I like brick because it’s timely and sub-

stantive,” says Mark. “We do matching mortar because the façade reads differently at different distances. When you’re farther away, it looks all white, and then as you get closer, you begin to see some of the detail. The building changes as you approach it.”

Bucktown Three has a two-story living room that looks out to the yard through a glass wall. Whenever possible, the studio tries to provide access to the outdoors and visually extend the indoor spaces outside. This connection is often accomplished by designing an L-shaped floor plan that wraps around

a yard. In a typical Chicago house, explains Mark, only the family room at the back is able to access the yard. In this “L” configuration, the short side holds back the street and the long side overlooks the yard.

House Etch, featured in a 2019 issue of *Residential Design*, is a good example. Located in the Lakeview neighborhood, the house is designed with a side yard that includes a deck with an outdoor kitchen, a hot tub, a lawn, and a basketball court.

From the outside, the house is a study in contrasting materials. The clients have a connection to Midcentury Modern architecture in Latin America, and wanted their home to have a strong material identity. The public part of the program is clad in cast-in-place concrete, and the private areas are wrapped in softer, stained cedar. “The conceit is that the wood was used to create the form work for the concrete,” says Mark.

The house’s crisp lines are accentuated by the coping and sills of prefabricated metal strips, which match the aluminum window framing, establishing an organizing grid for the house. The windows continue right up to the coping, creating vertical slots in the elevations; the ceiling is set back from the glass.







The clients for House 1909 asked for a “fishbowl” that opens to the street. A two-story cutout in the ceiling over the kitchen brings light from above, while a terrace level fraternizes with the tree canopy.



“What’s nice is that you read this other additional layer that changes from day to night and with the lighting,” says Mark. “I like the layering as you look through the windows and through the building.”

On the inside, the spaces are luminous with natural light. There’s a transparent, double-height living room, and the ceiling appears to float over the ground floor, thanks to all the glazing, including a continuous row of clerestory windows. “This is one of my favorite projects,” says Mark. “It really is challenging to do simplicity.”

### Large and Small

To see how Studio Dwell handles the challenge of a small lot, refer to House 1909. The lot is atypically small for Chicago (it’s 22-by-80 feet, versus the standard size of 25-by-125 feet). “We had zero room for landscaping in the yard,” notes Mark. “So we took the landscaping and put some on the garage roof, but mostly on the penthouse level.”

The penthouse is set back on both sides to provide room for greenery on front and back terraces. The



“We like Modern architecture and clean lines, but when we’re designing, we really think about how people use the spaces.”

—Mark Peters, AIA

garage has a sloped roof so that the homeowners can walk up the slope and enjoy the roof deck on top of the garage—the back patio is just up a flight of stairs. Inside the 3,000-square-foot house, a small but critical two-story space brings light in through a window above. “We like to carve these spaces out when we can,” says Mark. The glass-walled living room on the main level responds to the client’s request for a house that felt like a fishbowl.

On the other end of the spectrum, one of Studio Dwell’s largest urban infill homes, Wolcott Residence, just finished construction. The 8,500-square-foot house is on a double lot, and from the street, a dark cube, clad in German black brick, hovers dramatically in front of a transparent two-story space. “I like the juxtaposition of the heavy cube floating inside a glass frame,” says Mark. The cube contains an office and a reading loft. The reading nook is opaque on the exterior, but on the inside, it is serenely lit by skylights and overlooks a two-story living room.

It’s no surprise that on their questionnaire, the clients specifically requested a reading area, and answered yes to the question about reading for pleasure. “We try to design so that when you walk into your house, you take note of the architecture,” says Mark. “We want you to be able to take a pause and forget about your day.”—*Lydia Lee*



In the Wolcott Residence (shown in photo and rendering), a two-story glass wall showcases a sculptural stair. In the cantilevered volume, the glazed area contains an office and the German black brick conceals a secluded, skylit reading zone. A penthouse entertaining area pulls back from the street for privacy.



# Atrium Apartment

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
COLLEEN HEALEY ARCHITECTURE

Of the 162 buildings featured in the 2003 book “Best Addresses: A Century of Washington’s Distinguished Apartment Houses,” one in particular caught the eye of a real estate professional, a past client of Colleen Healey, AIA. He knew he would soon want the amenities, reduced maintenance, and single-story floor plan of apartment living, and the six-story 1965 structure in northwest Washington, D.C., looked ideal. When a penthouse unit became available, the owner closed the deal and reached out again to Colleen and her namesake architecture firm to refresh the interiors.

## Atrium Alterations

The 1,500-square-foot apartment was one of two remaining in the building to have intact an unusual feature: a private, open-air courtyard atrium enclosed by glass walls and sliding doors. Over time, the other 14 penthouse unit owners had covered their atriums, many with a gable glass roof that gained them a greenhouse but also a lot of solar heat.

Despite the courtyard atrium’s character, its energy inefficiency, upkeep, and placement conflicted with the carefree and accessible environment the owner wanted. Situated just inside the apartment’s double-door entry, the glass box interrupted sight lines between the kitchen in the northeast corner and the living room and dining room to the west.

However, Colleen largely had to “keep everything where it was,” since the building’s historic nature and multifamily use would not easily allow for







relocating ventilation stacks, pipelines, and ductwork. Instead, she adopted an approach of “erasing” the atrium’s footprint while embracing the 13-foot-by-11-foot ceiling opening left behind.

From the building’s structural drawings, Colleen knew the vertical supports at the atrium’s four corners needed to



stay. However, letting each column stand exposed “would feel too referential,” a constant reminder of the atrium that was. She encased the two northern columns into the ends of interior wall buildouts that now flank a feature wall. The southeast column remained embedded in a partition wall between the

kitchen and entry. The remaining steel column was painted white and clad in white oak panels to warm the interior.

For the ceiling opening itself, Colleen initially envisioned popping straight up with a glazed rectangular tower. But the structure would be visible from the neighboring apartment’s gabled pop-up to the north, obstructing its views and daylight access. Colleen switched to a single-sloped structure with a central skylight and base of rectangular and triangular clerestory windows. The assembly tapers up from the building’s flat roof to a height of 4 feet to the south—out of sight of the neighbor yet still a source of prolific daylight and views.

The skylight contractor assembled the pop-up frame and roof as one unit on-site. Inside, the design team detailed the clerestory mullions to be trimmed in



Brightly colored furnishings and artwork pop against a neutral palette warmed by white oak flooring and custom millwork. Mirrors in the hallway and bathroom help enlarge the apartment.





With its overhead concrete roof deck and the more complicated logistics of working in an occupied multi-family building, the design reused existing penetrations for ceiling lights and MEP connections.





Open and closed shelving units provide storage without overwhelming the interior. In the bathroom, a curved soffit conceals existing infrastructure while minimizing the ceiling height drop.

drywall tight against the glazing. The result is arguably as captivating as the former glass atrium.

### Floor Plan Fixes

With the newly open floor plan, Colleen could now tweak the apartment layout to her client's needs. "We felt that the living room was most important in that space," she says. She relocated it from the unit perimeter to the prime real estate under the skylight, between the kitchen and formal dining area. This shift freed up space along the northwestern wall to add an office beside the existing library.

In the primary bathroom, Colleen removed a second sink and annexed a former powder room. "People want a little bit larger bathrooms than when the building was originally built," she notes.

The apartment's concrete roof deck meant that ceiling-mounted light fixture locations were predetermined—introducing soffits would only further compress the apartment's 8-foot, 2-inch height. In areas needing additional lighting, such as the relocated living room, the project team built out slender chases on wall surfaces to accommodate new wiring. A reveal in the ceiling outlining

the former atrium enables the addition of suspended cylinder luminaires above the living room sofa. In the dining area, wiring for a belted black pendant and future track lighting tucks into what could pass as minimalist crown molding.

### A Case for Storage

The neutral color palette for the apartment walls and flooring provides a quiet backdrop for the bold and bright colors of its Modern furnishings and artwork. Colleen meticulously ensured that the bleached white oak engineered wood flooring would match to the ex-



The former enclosed atrium provided abundant daylight but cut off the kitchen from the living areas. Now the apartment has clear sight lines throughout its open layout while maintaining views outside.





Built as an integrated skylight and window assembly, the apartment's single-slope roof structure stays out of view of the neighboring unit's skylights.

tent possible the white oak veneer of custom millwork and floating shelves throughout the living areas. Balancing the ratio of open shelving to closed cabinetry ensured the copious storage did not visually overwhelm the space; and the pieces' clean lines and consistent detailing helped.

"There's not a lot of width across this unit," Colleen admits, "but storage drawers, bookshelves, and display space were high priorities for the owner." A variety of leather pulls and handles provides a soft and pliable contrast to the millwork's wood construction.

Since the project's completion in late 2023, about a year after Colleen Healey Architecture began design, the owner is spending more time in his beloved apartment. Colleen recalls a remark from one of her builders that encapsulates her team's objective of making the most of existing spaces and their associated constraints: "We are temporary caretakers of these buildings. Our job is to take care of them for the next 100 years until someone touches them again."

—Wanda Lau

## Atrium Apartment

Washington, D.C.

**ARCHITECT:** Colleen Healey, AIA, architect; Casey Meyer, project staff, Colleen Healey Architecture, Washington, D.C.

**BUILDER:** Owner subcontracted

**HOME CONTROL SYSTEMS:** Craig Kiker, Powerhouse, Silver Spring, Maryland

**LIGHTING DESIGN CONSULTANT:** Illuminations, Washington

**MILLWORK:** Mersoa Woodwork and Design, North Bethesda, Maryland

**PROJECT SIZE:** 1,500 square feet

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Jennifer Hughes Photography

### KEY PRODUCTS

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**COUNTERTOP:** Caesarstone

**FAUCETS:** Newport Brass (kitchen); Waterworks (shower and secondary bathroom)

**FLOORING:** Engineered white oak hardwood with cork underlayment

**HARDWARE, CABINETRY:** Blum

**LIGHTING CONTROLS:** Lutron

**LIGHTING, INTERIOR:** Buschfeld Design, Davide Groppi, Luminii, Vibia

**PAINT, INTERIOR:** Benjamin Moore Super White

**SINKS:** Waterworks (kitchen); Kohler (primary and secondary bathrooms)

**SKYLIGHT AND ROOF WINDOWS:** VELUX

**TOILET:** TOTO (primary bathroom)

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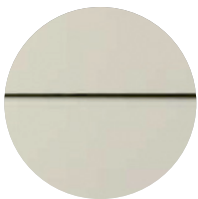
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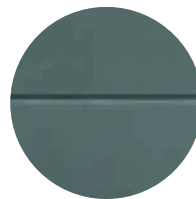
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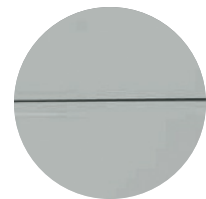
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# Pattern Play

A colorful courtyard sets the tone for a house that marries Modernism with a free-ranging material palette.

BY CHERYL WEBER

COURTYARD HOUSE  
ARCHITECT: SHIPLEY ARCHITECTS  
BUILDER: SHIPBUILD PARTNERS  
LOCATION: DALLAS

**There's an eclectic quality** to the home that Dan Shipley, FAIA, designed for empty nesters in a Dallas neighborhood. Its industrial overtones and simple parti are brought to life through intensive details, moody materials, and exuberant tile patterns. While these choices place it outside the Modernist less-is-more philosophy, in Dan's hands the result evokes a regional Texas Modernism that is both modest and memorable.





A “screened” porch laid with geometric tiles ushers visitors to the front door and sets the stage for the idiosyncratic interiors. Tall wood doors on the left can be pinned open when groups gather in the expansive covered courtyard beyond. At far right, a custom metal mailbox was inspired by Jules Verne novels.



The clients likely couldn’t have imagined this approach had they not toured Dan’s own house. They had seen it covered in 2020 by the Dallas Morning News architecture critic, who described it as fitting into the unique brand of Texas architecture espoused by Frank Welch and his mentor, O’Neil Ford. Dan’s unassuming house combines load-bearing brick walls with a series of rectangular volumes covered in metal and wood. Inside, several different types of woods are mixed with perforated screens and salvaged glass block that diffuse the light. Its well-scaled spaces express the joy of life through tactile materials that engage subtly with the environment.

The clients liked what they saw. On the verge of retirement, they were interested in highly crafted but relatively inexpensive materials for the house they planned to build on a vacant half-acre lot. Rather than having outdoor amenities like a swimming pool, they wanted an intro-





Beside the front door, a slim door fitted with a copper screen and perforated metal opens for fresh air. Views to the courtyard expand the sense of living space.

verted house that would give them both privacy and a central space for hosting large fundraising events several times a year. In addition, they planned for overnight visits from their children and grandchildren. “This is one of those houses that was built exactly as it was originally designed,” Dan says. “They were clear about their goals and aspirations and in sync with each other; we could get it right from the start.”

### Court Order

Despite its rectilinear forms and inward nature, the house is designed to blend with its more traditional neighbors. Although the central courtyard roof rises to 28 feet atop clerestory screens, the house is set back from the street and divided into discrete volumes: a one-story corrugated-metal structure on the south contains the main living spaces and primary suite; across the courtyard, a





two-story building covered in wood-molded St. Joe brick from Louisiana houses the garage and two guest bedrooms above. A corridor connects the two volumes at the rear of the courtyard, opening it to the backyard.

An exquisitely detailed entry sequence piques the curiosity of arriving visitors. From the auto court, a brick landscape wall guides visitors to a covered porch screened by a full-height brick lattice wall. This structure is laced with thin, exposed steel columns that create a peekaboo effect, and detailed with horizontal limestone courses that alternate in length as they rise. To the left, six 12-foot-tall, pivoting wood doors open to the courtyard, while the front door lies straight ahead. “There’s a nice sense of arrival when you get into this tall space between the brick screen and the tall wood gates,” Dan says. “It’s all about the proportions, putting the emphasis on the central void of the courtyard. The key to making it work was getting that brick screen figured



Left: A seating nook in the dining room. Above: At the entry, the architect-designed closet and bench offer a place to take off shoes.

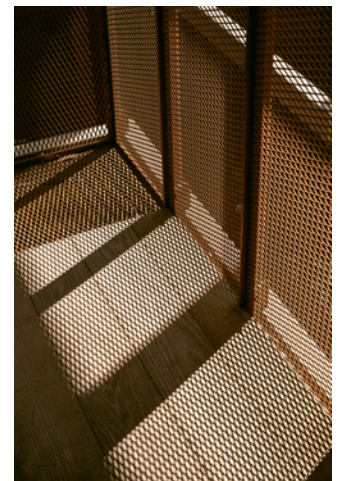
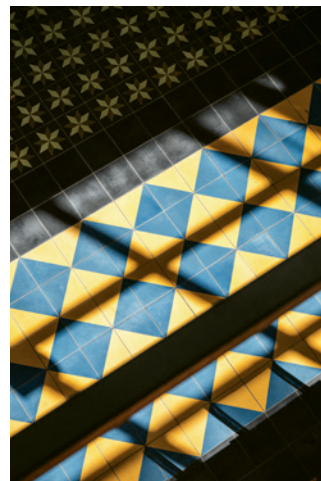
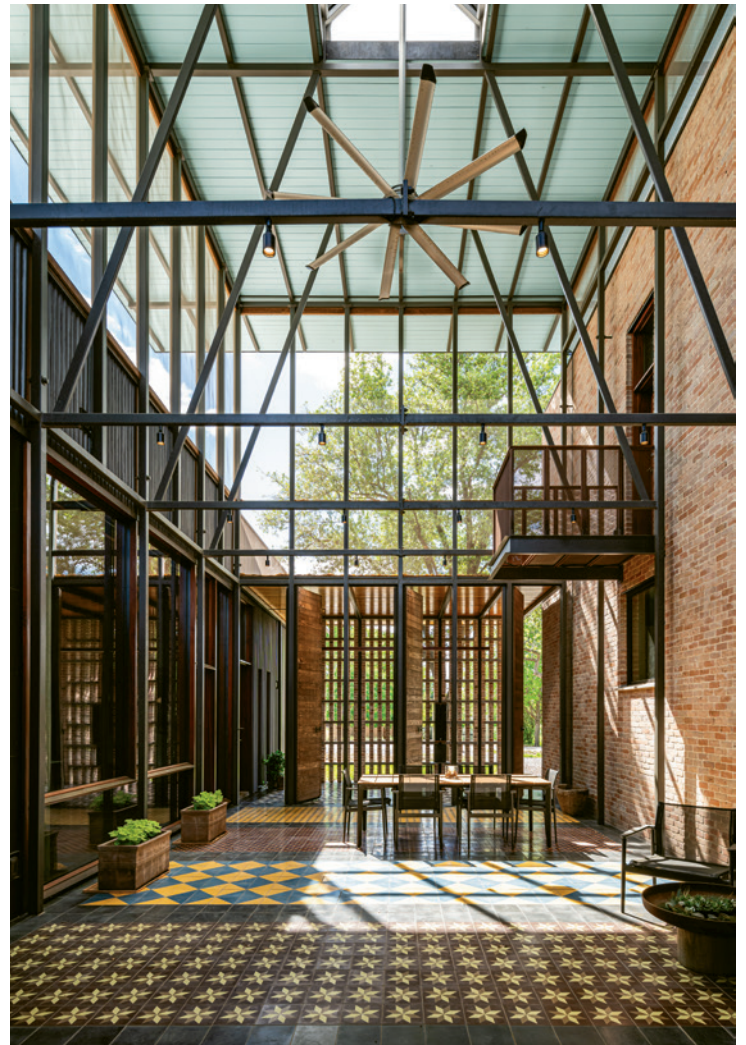
out and making it have a nice scale that draws you in, and then you have a certain amount of privacy.”

Although the house is introverted—unless the courtyard doors are open, you don’t see it when you come into the house—it is also very social. The courtyard opening’s three bays hold two doors each that pivot back-to-back and are pinned in place with a cane bolt in the floor. The holes follow the floor tile pattern, which is detailed to tie the space together. Using concrete tiles from the Dominican Republic, Dan created six bays of color and pattern that align with the structural framing and are separated by a dark border. “On the public side at the entrance, the tile is subdued, mainly black and white with some red,” he says. “You don’t see colors unless the gates are open. The yellow and blue tile bay is right in the middle under the skylight, at a bigger scale than the rest.”

Dan deployed a variety of pattern languages in the house, including the courtyard. Its framing structure is a forest of small-diameter tubular pieces designed to evoke tree branches, with stick-like angles that create shadow patterns as the sun moves through it. “The structural problems are solved with smaller rather than chunky elements,” Dan says. “Otherwise, it loses its charm and local quality.” The roof decking is made of 2-by-6 tongue-in-groove pine boards under a TPO membrane. Its blue hue recalls the paint color traditionally used on porch ceilings. “From the street you can see the underside of the roof,” he says. “We used a sky-blue stain that makes you appreciate the blue of the sky.” A bronze insect screen in the framing between the walls and roof allows hot air to escape the courtyard.

While the main house has many connections to this sunlit void, a balcony at the top of the stairs between the





A forest of slim steel tubes casts changing shadows on courtyard surfaces, where concrete tile patterns align with the six framing bays. The guest suite balcony above the garage is made from expanded metal like that used on landscape trailers.





On the garage/guest volume, red woven vinyl fabric covers the stairwell walls, eliminating the need for trim. The floor in the connector is cork.



guest bedrooms is the only view into the courtyard from the north volume. “It allows you to be aware from the kitchen side of what’s going on over on that side,” Dan says. “You can see when the lights are on without having any privacy intrusion.”

Cantilevered steel channels fitted with diagonal, expanded-metal flooring and sides give the balcony a low-key presence. “Every landscape trailer has a ramp of expanded

metal; it’s the most common material there is,” Dan says. “It’s put together in way that fits just right and is lightweight and sort of transparent.” The balcony is composed of four 16-inch-wide sections bolted together. Three sections have a wood floor, while the fourth module of open metal provides a view to the lively tile patterns below.

### Mood Board

“The house is very musical in a way; there’s a rhythm, and quarter or sixteenth notes that things fit into,” Dan says. “It’s a very simple thing that took an enormous amount of planning.” To keep the project within budget, Dan became the general contractor and daily site superintendent, which also allowed him to control every detail. For example, he designed the one-story main volume around the dimensions of the corrugated metal cladding. Its precisely placed knuckles navigate the structure’s 90-degree turns, eliminating the need for corner trim.

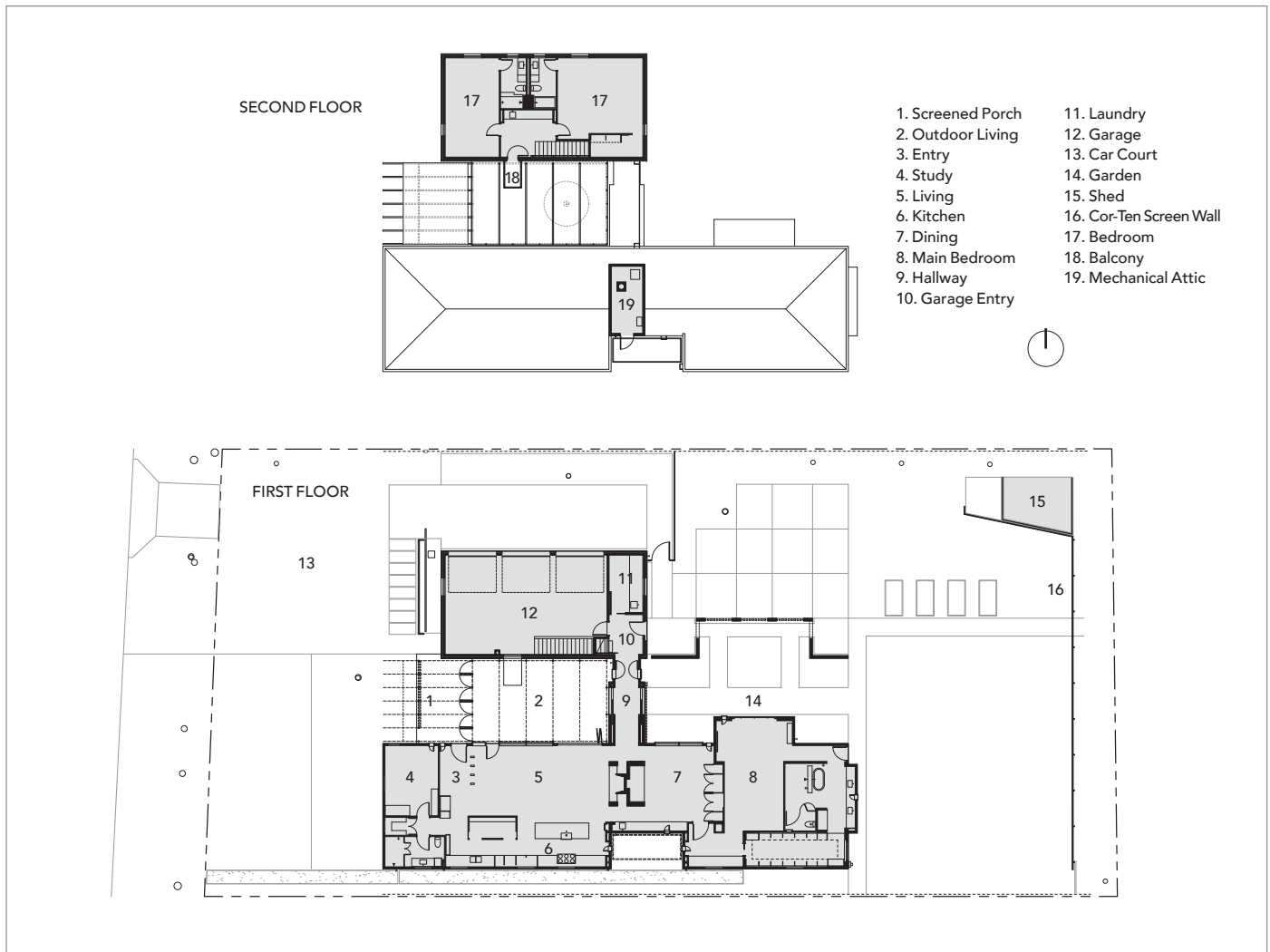
Under 12-foot ceilings, the main living volume is organized around the open kitchen and living area, which looks due north into the courtyard through a glass wall system that includes a 10-foot span of bifold doors. The courtyard’s roof height allows sunlight from behind this one-story space to shine directly onto the two-story brick garage wall, animating its surface throughout the day. Four-foot-square windows along the south elevation, which lies 6 feet from the property line, are positioned 8 feet above the floor to admit light and treetop views while screening the neighbors.

Even the improvisational aspects come off as well-considered. Tasked with integrating the clients’ existing furniture into the scheme, Dan visited their condo many



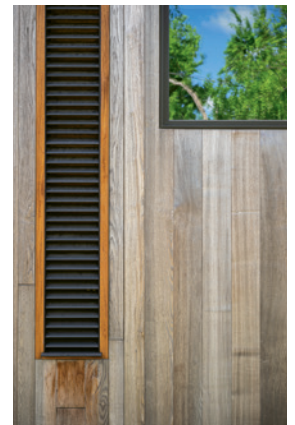
On the panel between the tub and shower, tile colors and patterns evoke sunlight penetrating the water’s surface. A deep glass transom creates continuity between the toilet and wet areas.





times to get a sense of the pieces' color, texture, and scale. "There's a certain amount of contrast in the woods and finishes; all that ended up working the way I hoped it would," he says. Four 5-by-7-inch longleaf pine timber posts define the entryway, where his team designed and built a cabinet and a bench that runs through it. Floors are quartersawn white oak, except for wall-to-wall carpet in the primary suite. The corridor connecting the two volumes has a gray cork floor, and the living and dining room ceilings are finished with reddish sapele slats that hide acoustical batts and integrate the light fixtures.

White plaster walls and accents help to unify the work. Plastered concrete block columns sandwich the living room fireplace. The concrete hearth was cast in place, while the face is made of dark, powder-coated aluminum that bends to create a minimalist mantel. The top of the fireplace is clad in jet-black Richlite, which also wraps a soffit be-



The sky-blue courtyard roof takes its cue from traditional porch soffits.



## Courtyard House

Dallas

**ARCHITECT:** Dan Shipley, FAIA, Shipley Architects, Dallas

**BUILDER:** Shipbuild Partners, Dallas

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Paper Kites Studios, Dallas

**ENGINEER:** Coombs Engineering, Plano, Texas

**PROJECT SIZE:** 4,400 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.5 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Robert Tsai

### KEY PRODUCTS

**COOKING VENT HOOD:** Elica

**COOKTOP:** Dacor

**COUNTERTOPS:** Wilsonart

**DISHWASHER:** Bosch

**ENGINEERED LUMBER:** Boise Cascade

**EXTERIOR CLADDING:** St. Joe Brick Works, Western States Metal Roofing, Delta, Old Texas Brick

**ENTRY DOORS:** Marvin bifold, multislide pocket; Thermory ash (courtyard pivot doors)

**EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** FX Luminaire, Moon Visions

**FANS:** Big Ass Fans

**FAUCETS:** Blanco, Hansgrohe, Dornbracht

**FIREPLACE:** Earthcore Isokern

**FLOORING:** Sabine Hill cement tile, DuroDesign cork

**HVAC SYSTEMS:** Fujitsu mini-splits, Enertech Navigator geothermal HVAC, Schluter (bath radiant heating)

**INSULATION:** VaproShield SA

**OVENS:** Wolf

**PASSAGE DOOR HARDWARE:** Schlage

**PHOTOVOLTAICS:** Qcells

**POWER WALL:** Tesla

**REFRIGERATOR:** Dacor

**ROOFING:** GAF TPO

**SINKS:** Barclay, Kohler

**SURFACING:** Richlite

**TOILETS:** TOTO

**TRIM:** Vicostone quartz (bathroom)

**TUBS:** Cheviot Regal, Kohler Underscore

**UNDERLAYMENT:** AdvanTech

**WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS:** Lutron

**WINDOWS:** Marvin

**WINE REFRIGERATOR:** Dacor



tween the kitchen and dining room and echoes the dark-painted kitchen cabinetry.

Pops of saturated color add panache in the primary suite, where a partial wall of glazed tiles separates the shower from a freestanding tub. Dark blue tiles on the lower part of the wall evoke deep water, becoming lighter blue as they rise, just as sunlight penetrates a water surface. Nearby, a custom double door and transom establish continuity between the toilet and wet areas.

### Literary Echoes

If it's hard to precisely characterize Dan's work, it's because his inspirations range from traditional to modern—and even to literary fiction. “I’ve always learned more from traditional architecture than modern architecture,” he says. “I love to visit the great icons of modern architecture, like the Kimball Museum, but I’m also just as enthralled by beautiful traditional buildings, like the Austin Public Library or the Battle Hall library at UT Austin, where there’s a great intensity of details and they are so beautifully resolved and make such a persuasive story.”

Here, unexpected details quietly shape the character of the house. Beside the front door, a pair of tall, narrow copper screens are sandwiched between a grid of square-perforated metal and fitted on the inside with hinged doors that open to






ventilate the house and invite in ambient neighborhood sounds. “It’s very transformative, like part of the wall goes away,” Dan says. In the covered entryway is a mailbox “like Jules Verne might have had,” he adds. The lockable metal box fits neatly into the brick lattice module. “It’s kind of mysterious in a way. We explained to the mailman how to use it.” The home’s doorbell contraption is a steampunk-meets-Downton-Abbey touch. Pushing it activates a vintage-looking servant’s bell “at a pitch that carries through the house just enough to work really well.”

Indeed, these masterful details are a critical component of the architect’s alchemy. Out back, more brick latticework defines a semi-transparent play area for the grandchildren. And a 10-foot-tall Cor-Ten screen marks the backyard boundary. In the far corner it makes a turn and becomes a wall for the potting shed.



A second brick lattice in the backyard functions as a semi-transparent screen between the seating area and a sports court where the grandchildren play. The combination of wood, metal, and brick creates a texturally rich exterior.

Dan admits he likes modern architecture’s freedom to make up his own rules. But he also delights in being reined in by the dictates of materials. “We try hard to do projects that may be different but are not visually aggressive,” he says. With its humor, surprises, and warmth, Courtyard House makes a convincing case for that approach. 





## City Sights

In the hands of talented architects, urban dwellings capture light, vitality, and views.

BY LYDIA LEE, CHERYL WEBER, AND S. CLAIRE CONROY





## Alma Switch House

MANHATTAN BEACH, CALIFORNIA  
BROOKS + SCARPA

**For their new home** in Manhattan Beach, California, clients of the Los Angeles office of Brooks + Scarpa had the ideal request. “They really wanted light and air, which was right up my alley,” says Lawrence Scarpa, FAIA.

The clients, a couple with three young children who live full-time in this Southern California beach community, also wanted five bedrooms and a three-car garage. Fitting the entire program into a compact urban infill site took some juggling by the well-regarded firm, which has another office in Florida and whose many awards include the AIA’s highest honor, the Gold Medal.







### A Better Approach

At the beach, the simple way to maximize square footage while providing the mandated amount of open space is to pull the building edge back and add balconies. Surrounding this Manhattan Beach house are many homes that deploy this very strategy, from sleek contemporary homes to Italian villas and shingled cottages. However, the downside of this approach is that the home has deep floor plates and lacks natural lighting and ventilation at its core.

*Previous pages:* The façade is clad in white stucco and paired with a black anodized aluminum screen. "It's a classic combination, like a tuxedo," says Larry. *This page:* Circulation corridors of the house are deliberately revealed rather than obscured.







Ask, and sometimes ye shall receive more than you expected. The design team at Brooks + Scarpa flipped the typical model, creating a courtyard house instead. “I showed the clients how we could make everything one room deep, so that there would be exposure to sun and air on all sides,” says Larry. Built to the allowable edge of the property, the 4,800-square-foot building is “the biggest box possible,” he says.

In the center is a small 12-by-12-foot courtyard, surrounded by inward-facing balconies. The walls surrounding the courtyard are, for the most part, fully glazed. The transparent core of the dwelling means that the family can stay visibly connected while occupying different spaces.

Meanwhile, the ocean views are more accessible because you can see them from the inside, rather than having to go out onto a balcony in pursuit



The main entertaining space is on the top level, which also has the best views. The corner of the third floor functions as a balcony when the glass stacking doors are pulled back. This side of the house faces a walking path to the beach, a quiet route only for pedestrians and bicyclists.





of them. “You’re not fighting for views,” notes Larry.

Because it is optimized for passive cooling—relying on natural ventilation and shades to block the sun—the house is also extremely energy-efficient. The building exceeds the state’s Title 24 requirements by 40 percent, allowing a solar array to handle much of the home’s electricity requirements.

### Less Revealing

To maintain privacy, the architects designed a custom anodized aluminum screen, which provides a degree of transparency while blocking views from outside. “From the inside, it’s easy to see out, but if you’re moving past the building, it’s hard to see through it,” Larry explains. To assure their clients that things would work

as planned, the architects created a mockup of the screen, building a full, 10-foot-tall panel so the clients could experience it for themselves.

The screen runs along the long open side of the courtyard, shielding the interiors from the road. It also functions as a brise-soleil, filtering the strong Southern California sun. On the lower levels, it serves as both a privacy and security grille.

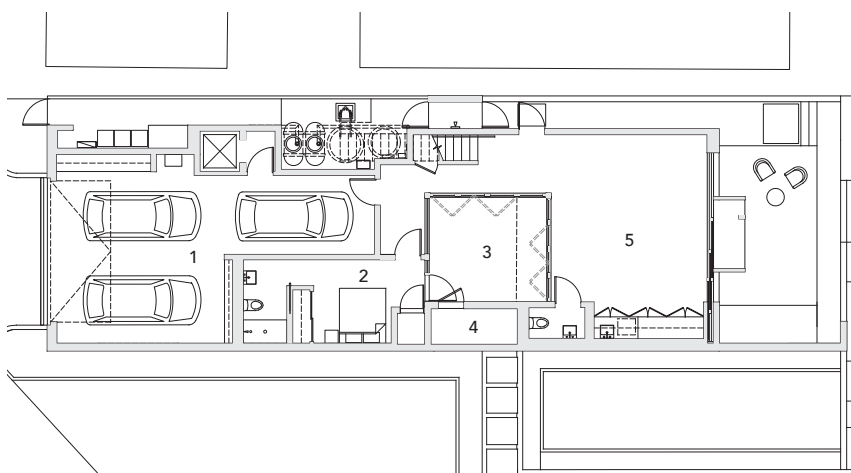
The screen doesn’t extend all the way across, revealing a glass-walled section of the house. However, that particular section consists of circulation corridors, not private spaces. Operable windows along the hallways provide ventilation along the short axis, while windows at the ends of the hallways do the same along the long axis.



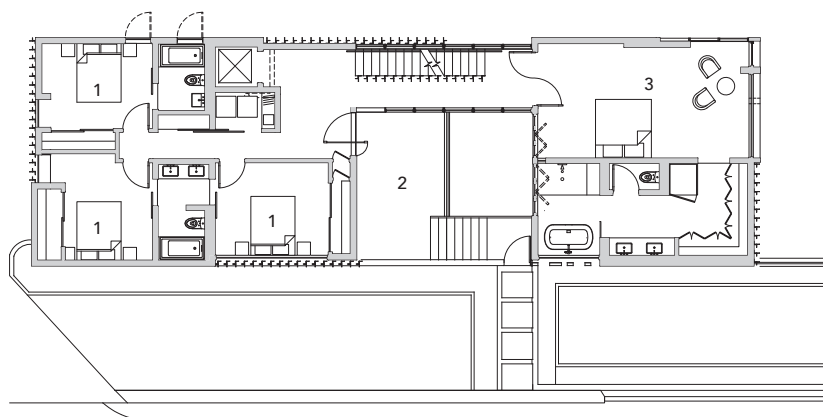
The screening is made of bent aluminum pieces that give it some depth. Strategically deployed, the screens provide privacy, shading, and dynamism to the interiors.



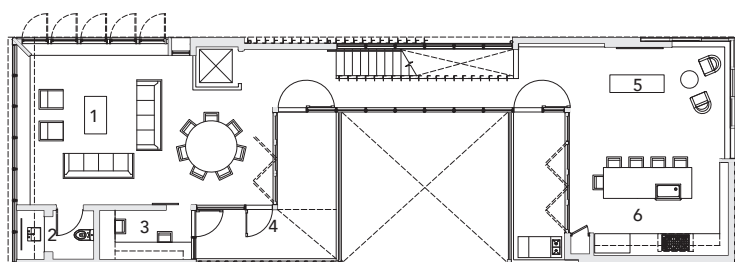




FIRST FLOOR PLAN | 1. Garage | 2. Bedroom | 3. Courtyard | 4. Storage Room | 5. Kitchen



SECOND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Bedroom | 2. Balcony | 3. Main Bedroom



THIRD FLOOR PLAN | 1. Living Room | 2. Bathroom | 3. Study Room | 4. Balcony  
5. Living Room | 6. Kitchen

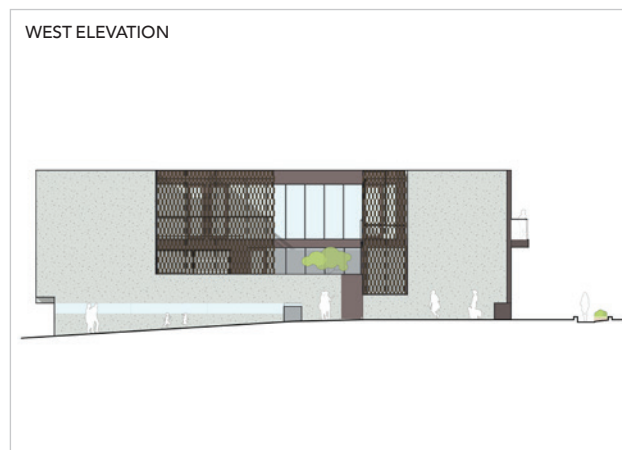
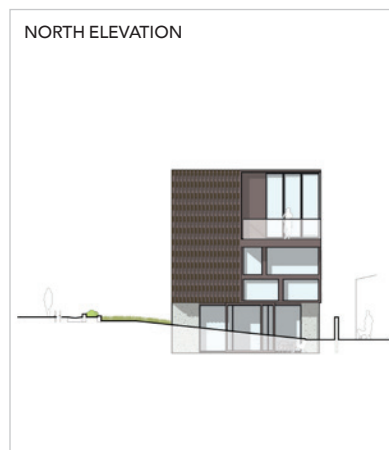
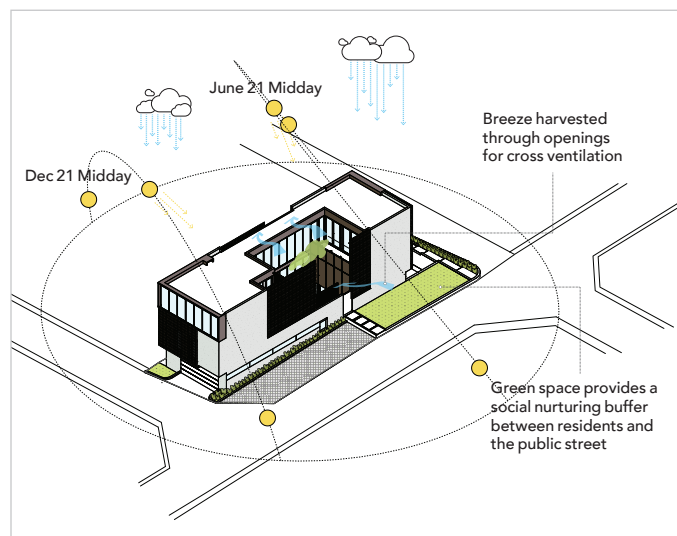
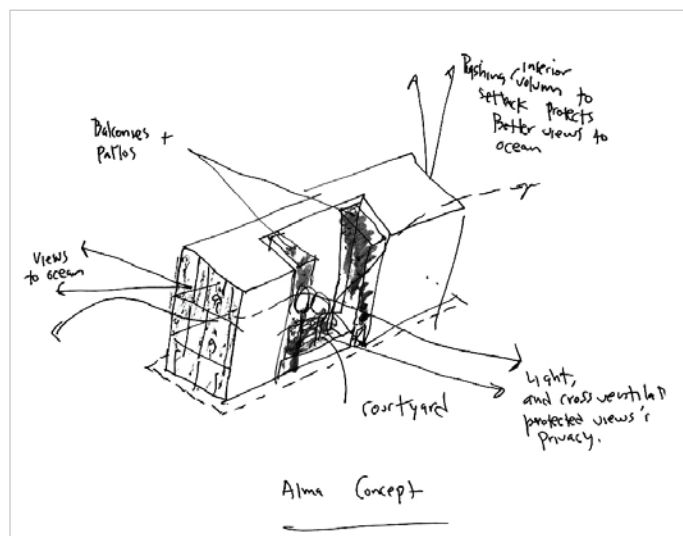


### Everything is Illuminated

Yet another wrinkle that the design team had to contend with: The site sloped steeply towards the ocean. To create more space for the extensive program, the architects partially excavated the site and designed the house with three floors, making it as tall as the local building code allows. The main floor is raised above street level so that the sunken garden level can still have good access to light. The ground level holds the garage, a guest bedroom, and the family rec room; the main floor is devoted to bedrooms; and the top floor is for entertaining.

The entry sequence offers a distinctive architectural experience. To reach the front door, you first pass through a gate onto a terrace that overlooks the courtyard below. Then you walk up a short flight of stairs to reach a large pivoting glass door. From there, you are ushered up





## Alma Switch House

Manhattan Beach, California

**ARCHITECT:** Lawrence Scarpa, FAIA, principal in charge; Jennifer Doublet, project architect; Iliya Muzychuk, project designer, Brooks + Scarpa Architects, Inc., Hawthorne, California

**BUILDER:** Peter Borrego, PD Construction Inc., Sun Valley, California

**LANDSCAPE:** Brooks + Scarpa Architects, Inc.

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING:** Cristóbal Paniagua, Paniagua Inc., Los Angeles

**MEP ENGINEERING:** Paul Antieri, Antieri & Associates Consulting Engineers, Inc., Santa Clarita, California

**SOILS ENGINEERING:** Grover-Hollingsworth & Associates Inc., Westlake Village, California

**PROJECT SIZE:** 4,821 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.06 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$560 per square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Tara Wujcik

### KEY PRODUCTS:

**CABINETRY:** Walnut veneer

**CLADDING:** Pacific Palette Stucco Dash Finish with Sparkle Grain, sheet metal walls and fascia, aluminum break metal fins, perforated metal panels

**COOKING VENT HOOD:** Wolf

**COOKTOP:** Wolf

**COUNTERTOPS:** Caesarstone

**DECKING:** Ecotech

**DISHWASHER:** Fisher & Paykel

**DOOR HARDWARE:** Emtek

**DRAINAGE SYSTEM:** Tremco TremDrain Total Drain

**ENTRY DOORS:** Western Window Systems

**EXTERIOR LIGHTING:** B-K Lighting, SPJ Lighting, WAC Lighting

**ELEVATOR:** Rocky Mountain

**FAUCETS:** Kallista, Phylrich

**FLOORING:** Wide plank oak

**GRILL, BUILT-IN:** Coyote

**INTERIOR LIGHTING:** Alloy LED, Jet Lighting, Lucifer Lighting, Fry Reglet

**MIRROR:** Cielo

**PAVERS:** Hanover

**PAINT, INTERIOR:** Benjamin Moore, Dunn Edwards

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** Sika Sarnafil

**SINKS:** Kohler, Lacava

**TOILETS:** Hydrology

**TUBS:** Winifred, Kohler

**VENTILATION, BATHROOMS:** NuTone

**WASHER/DRYER:** LG

**WINE FRIDGE:** Sub-Zero

**WINDOWS/WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS:** Western Window Systems

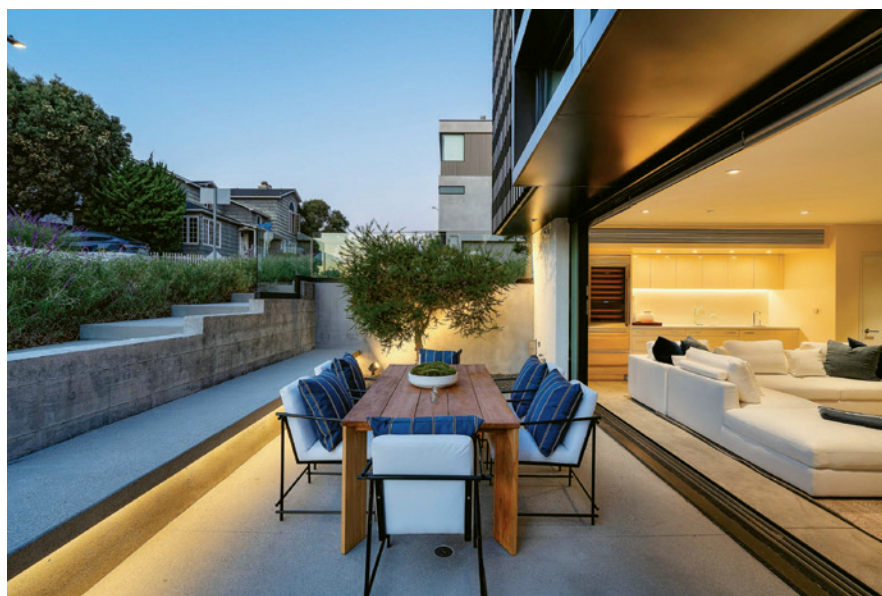




a transparent stairwell to the top floor, which has the best views.

The interior courtyard is useful for more than just light and air: It also provides physical and acoustic separation on each level. On the second floor, the courtyard opening separates the primary suite from the children's wing. Meanwhile, the top floor has the open feeling of a great room, but the courtyard breaks out the kitchen from the large living/dining room. When there are guests, a small living area adjoining the kitchen gives the children their own hangout space while still remaining in eyeshot of their parents.

The house actually does have an external balcony, but one that doesn't require a setback. In a deft move, the corner of the kitchen opens up entirely through stacking glass doors. An additional glass railing ensures that the




balcony-on-demand functions safely.

"Custom homes tend to have a little more room around them. This one was very tight," says Larry. "Working

within very specific constraints was challenging and rewarding. Sometimes when you have boundaries, it makes for better solutions."—*Lydia Lee*





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## Solar House

CHICAGO  
BOOTH HANSEN





In a gridded city like Chicago, it's rare to find a triangular lot like the one Larry Booth's clients purchased in Lincoln Park. They lived several blocks away in a house that lacked natural light and were thrilled to find a plot with the potential for greater solar exposure. Booth Hansen's team fully exploited the unique lot shape with a sawtooth design that faces south and, as a bonus, creates space for gardens.

The corner lot wasn't a clean slate, however. "On the lot was a house that had too much imagination applied to it," says Larry. "It was a mess, nothing worth saving inside." They were, however, able to reuse some of the existing foundation, along with two-story masonry walls that formed the back of the house on the west and north. The new zigzag footprint on the southeast faces the longest side of the triangle and views of the tree-lined street. "Chicago really has a tradition of the street grid and gardens," Larry says. "By facing the zigzag into the hypotenuse, we created a series of four triangu-







lar gardens. The rooms that face the gardens have two walls that look out on the gardens.”

This geometric sleight of hand resulted in a central double-height living space with a study, dining room, kitchen, and den that revolve around it. Tucked back into the lot’s 90-degree angle, the two-car garage is accessed from an alley on the west. Upstairs are a recreation area, second study, guest bedroom, and primary bedroom that looks south and east over the gardens and leafy street. The new façades also made possible a generous 25 percent window-to-wall ratio where it counted—the existing west and north walls have only one window, in the guest room looking down on the alley. “Light was the reason to move,” Larry says. “It’s unusual to see the sky out of a Chicago residence because the buildings are close together; they were cooped up for years in this dark, confining environment and wanted to free themselves out of that.”

### Under the Radar

They were also firm about avoiding a statement house. Although the neighborhood has since gentrified, the residences around them were





The kitchen island disguises itself as cabinetry when viewed from the open living room. Off the kitchen, a den opens to the south patio and outdoor grill.

lower-middle-class when built, and the clients wanted people to drive by without noticing the new house. In fact, they gave some of the more stunning bricks on option a thumbs down in favor of a mix of commonly used Chicago bricks, some flecked with yellows. The façades, too, are modest and subtly articulated. Window openings are strongly verti-

cal to balance the building's horizontality, and the elevations vary slightly: ribbons of floor-to-ceiling windows in the center section contrast with the horizontally patterned brick between the first- and second-story windows on the wings, which creates a shadow pattern. The flush soldier course above each window bay is a standard masonry finish.





“After it became clear that they didn’t want a big architectural statement, but to recede into the neighborhood, the house pretty much designed itself on the inside,” says Larry. Light was the compass point for the design. White oak floors, cabinetry, and window trim unify the rooms. The clients’ preference for a kitchen that faces the living room prompted the design of a sculpted island that screens views into the work area. Horizontal wood accents and display niches help to disguise the island as built-in casework. “Two-thirds of the island is high so you can’t see into the kitchen from the living room,” Larry says. “A third portion drops down, and the backdrop for that is solid storage. It becomes kind of a wood panel wall you can step behind and still enjoy the conversation without the people seated in the living room being able to see dirty dishes.”

Other rooms are more intimate by comparison. The dining room occupies a lower-ceilinged space on the north, between the living room and open stairwell to the second floor. A cozy den is situated on the southernmost stepped volume, where a minimalist fireplace and a wall of white oak cabinetry and shelving continue the airy vibe, and where dou-

In contrast to the double-height living room, the dining room tucks under a second-floor exercise area overlooking the living room. White oak built-ins lend a serene vibe in the main bedroom.







ble doors open to an outdoor grill area. Upstairs, a portion of the second-floor hallway incorporates a workout space overlooking the living room. And in the primary suite, a niche in the white oak storage wall creates a headboard for the bed.

### Grounded

Outside, several landscape elements—some new, some already in place—were key to the owners’ privacy and the grace with which the house meets

the ground. Along the alley and sidewalk, a 6-foot-tall existing concrete block wall was stuccoed at each end. Between them, a new latticed cedar fence marks the house entry and softens the brick façades, while allowing air to circulate in the gardens. Borrowed landscape, a Japanese concept, is part of the picture. In addition to views of the gardens from inside, “you can see trees on the other side of the street on the parkway,” Larry says. “Looking at the plants, trees, and sky,

The primary suite’s white-oak-lined corridor serves as a closet and dressing room. In the bath, wood cabinetry and tawny tilework reinforce the primary suite’s sense of calm.

## Solar House

Chicago

**ARCHITECT:** Larry (Laurence) Booth, FAIA, principal in charge; Kelly Tang, project architect, Booth Hansen, Chicago

**BUILDER:** MC Construction, Chicago

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Deanna Berman, Deanna Berman Design Alternatives, Chicago

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Carrie Woleben-Meade, Mariani Landscape, Lake Bluff, Illinois

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Mehul Shani, SP Engineers, Chicago

**PROJECT SIZE:** 4,336 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.11 acre

**CONSTRUCTION:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Steve Hall, Hall + Merrick + McCaugherty

### KEY PRODUCTS

**BATH TILE:** Daltile

**CABINETRY:** European Woodworkers

**CLADDING:** Modular Brick, Summit Brick, Grain Modular, Tumbled Blend (mix of Twilight, Fawn, and Ginger colors)

**COOKING VENT HOOD:** Bosch

**COOKTOP:** Wolf induction

**COUNTERTOPS:** Quartzite, Caesarstone

**DISHWASHER:** Bosch

**ENTRY DOORS:** Andersen Windows E-Series

**EXTERIOR OPENING CASINGS:** Indiana limestone

**FAUCETS:** Kohler, Dornbracht

**FIREPLACE:** Heat & Glo

**FIREPLACE SURROUND:** Daltile

**FLOORING:** Virginia Millworks Blue Ridge Oak Distressed engineered wood

**GARAGE DOORS:** Chicago Overhead Door

**MICROWAVE:** Wolf

**MILLWORK:** Rift- and plain-sawn white oak

**OVENS:** Wolf

**PHOTOVOLTAICS:** JinkoSolar

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**SINKS:** Kohler

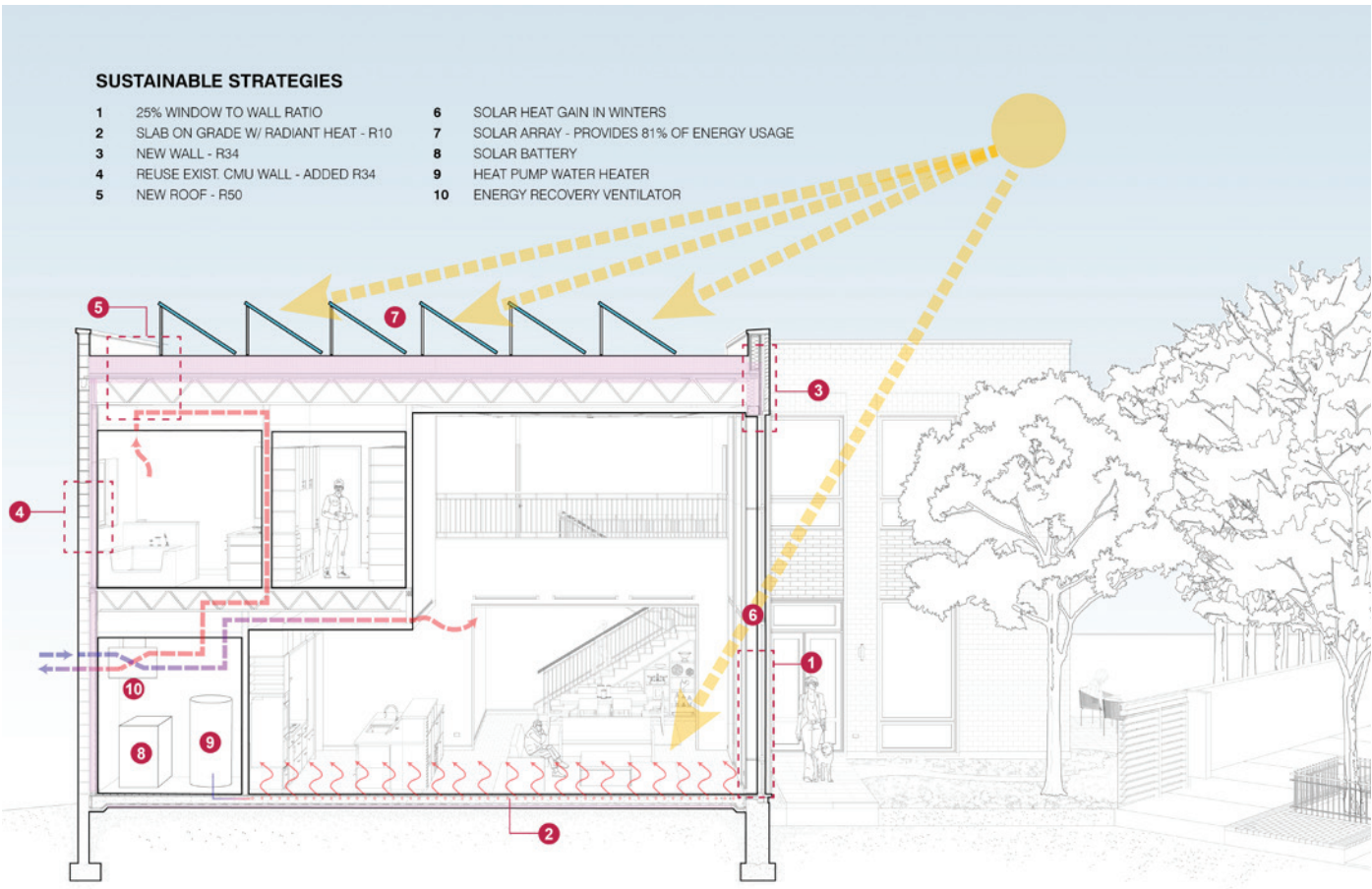
**TOILETS:** TOTO

**TUB:** Kohler

**WINDOWS:** Andersen Windows E-Series

**WINE REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero







you have the sense that you're in much more of a landscape than a cityscape. The trees are 30 or 40 feet high, so in summer they provide some shade and help to limit solar gain on the house's south side."

In addition to achieving a design that harnesses the site's environmental energy, the clients and their architect looked closely at what a zero-energy house would require. The husband, who works as a value consultant for industries, was compelled to run the numbers. "He hired the best mechanical engineer in Chicago to really look into how we could get to zero energy," says Larry. "We could do it, but the last 5 or so percent you were getting paybacks of about 250 years. At some point you quit investing in residential systems to get to zero energy, take that money and buy an electric car or do something else with it." So, while triple glazing and a geothermal system didn't make practical or financial sense for the client, the entire roof surface was covered with solar panels that supply 81 percent of the home's energy load; a battery stores the excess for later use. Those measures were combined with spray foam and batt insulation, mini-split units for heating and cooling, an Energy Recovery Ventilator, and a heat pump water heater that powers the radiant floor heat in the slab-on-grade first floor.

With its gardens, borrowed views, and stepped façades that pour light into the interior, this is a house that, despite being locked into the urban grid, is inherently connected to nature.

—Cheryl Weber











## 607 Woodward Apartments

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
BONSTRA | HARESIGN

**Few firms** in Washington, D.C., understand city buildings as well as Bonstra | Haresign. Founded just over 20 years ago by David Haresign, FAIA, and his partner Bill Bonstra, FAIA, the 30-person office has completed countless complex multifamily and commercial renovations, new builds, and adaptive reuses in the city itself and its surrounding towns and suburbs. Meanwhile, David and his wife, Patricia, raised their children in a single-family house in a leafy D.C. neighborhood that was close-in, but not truly urban.







The vintage Woodward building was among the first in the city to offer duplex units. In his renovation, David sought to improve the flow and function between the levels.



“We bought our house because it was close to where Patty worked,” says David. “It was an OK neighborhood then, but it’s now blossomed into a highly desirable one. It had four bedrooms up, 4 and a half baths, and an apartment below. But it was too much house by the time our kids were gone, and I had always wanted to live in a more urban area.” However, David’s wife took a bit longer to convince.

In the meantime, the couple acquired a few investment properties, including one of the earliest duplex apartments in town. It was on the top two floors of a landmark building designed by Harding and Upman called The Woodward on Connecticut Avenue. It’s one of the grand avenues designed by L’Enfant and named after the states of the union at the time. Wider than other streets, these roads break the rigid east/west, north/south grid of the city plan.

Opened in 1910 as a luxury rental building and converted to condos in the ’70s, The Woodward occupies a prominent corner on the southeast side of the Taft Bridge. It’s a notable location overlooking Rock Creek Park and within a cluster of other distinguished period apartment buildings. In addition to their architecture, the buildings here benefit from generous setbacks from the street and a high point just above the original boundary line of the city. On a clear day, standing in front of any of these buildings and looking down Connecticut Avenue provides a piled perspective view of the city that seems to extend all the way down the fall line to the tidal Potomac River bed.

It’s no wonder that the potential of the apartment, which they bought in 2014, captured David’s design imagination immediately. Still, it was close to 10 years before he could realize his goal for the place. In the interim, he did a light “builder grade renovation” on the duplex and put it on the rental market.







“We had great tenants for those years, but I was getting impatient,” he recalls. “And then they decided to move after expecting their second baby.”

### Catching the Curve

“The timing of their leaving was perfect,” says David. “I had moved my parents into senior housing 12 years ago, and boy was it a bear. Patty retired in 2019, and we found the center of our lives had moved here.”

So he pulled the sketch he made back in 2014 off the wall and got to work on a full makeover of the two-level, 2,000-square-foot apartment. “That sketch is pretty much what we ended up with. We tore out every partition down to the plumbing.” Apart from the steel structure and the original windows, everything was fair game. Virtually none of the period character of the units remained after the original conversion to condos.

David’s broad goals were to open up the entertaining space on the main level and optimize the flow and acoustics on the upper, private level. Each floor

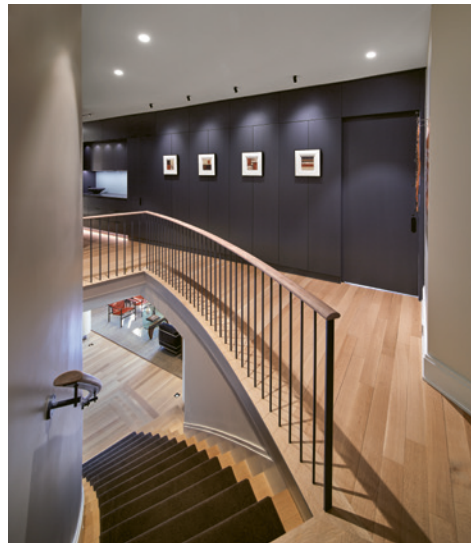


Seeking “serenity in rigor,” David sweated every detail of the built-in cabinetry flanking the kitchen and living room. Walnut veneers and granite tops suggest fine furniture, while the limited palette allows it to recede graciously into the background. A service kitchen and pantry handles party support.

has 1,000 square feet, constrained in part by a curved inner wall where the stair is located and a turn at the outer wall where the building negotiates the veer of the street just before the bridge. “The stair was in a tube that ended six

feet back from where it is now and it felt really tight at the bottom,” he explains. Removing the wall between the living area and the stair, changing the treads and risers, and creating an ample landing made all the difference in the





perception and function of the space. “It’s now a great processional stair,” he says. “And it was one of the most successful moves we made.”

With the partition walls down between the living room, dining room, kitchen, and stair, the curved inner wall is transformed from a constraint to a dynamic feature of the room.

(“A rounded wall,” David notes, “is every architect’s dream.”) The newly unfettered space is now fully opened to natural light and views from the perimeter wall of windows and liberated from the bowling alley flow that tiered apartments are prone to.

Even the remaining steel columns became a decorative motif in the room,



Pulling back the stairwall and adding a commodious landing invites a stroll to the upstairs gallery. Thickened walls conceal storage in the halls and in the private realm, where David’s wife, Patty, has a dedicated office.







Three bedrooms became one flowing primary suite, with dressing room, bedroom, and office. Custom radiator grilles evoke the building's columns.

with their lengths wrapped in pleasing curves and their connections subtly revealed at the floor and ceiling. New lighting, integrated speakers, and other infrastructure are concealed in dropped ceiling panels David calls “clouds,” while the main focus of the space shifts to walnut veneer cabinetry bookending the living room and kitchen. A similar floating cabinet marks the division between the dining and living areas. A backdrop of white oak floors laid atop the original flooring allows rich cabinetry, furnishings, and the striking blue entry door to pop.

### City Sanctuary

With just the empty nest couple to accommodate on the second level, David went about taking down more walls

### 607 Woodward Apartments Washington, D.C.

**ARCHITECT:** David Haresign, FAIA, principal in charge, Bonstra | Haresign Architects, Washington, D.C.; Sarah Wingo, AIA, Wyn Design, Washington

**BUILDER:** AllenBuilt, Bethesda, Maryland

**METALSMITH:** Rick's Custom Welding

**PROJECT SIZE:** 2,000 square feet

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Anice Hoachlander, Studio HDP

#### KEY PRODUCTS

**BATHROOM VENTILATION:** Panasonic

**CABINETRY:** Rift-cut reconstituted European walnut finish, Ferris Custom Cabinetry, Washington

**CABINETRY HARDWARE:** Top Knobs

**COOKTOP/OVENS:** Wolf

**COUNTERTOPS:** Honed Virginia Mist granite

**DISHWASHER:** Miele

**FAUCETS:** Grohe, Axor Starck

**FLOORING:** Select rift and quartered white oak

**HVAC:** Runtal steam radiators

**LIGHTING:** Artemide, iGuzzini, Juno, MP Lighting, Interlux, Omni, Sonneman, Satulight

**LIGHTING CONTROL:** Lutron

**PAINTS:** Sherwin-Williams, Benjamin Moore

**REFRIGERATOR:** Blomberg

**SINKS:** Franke (kitchen); Nameeks, Kraus, Signature

**TOILETS:** Duravit Starck, Kohler

**TUB:** MTI Baths

**WINE REFRIGERATOR:** Summit





there, too. What had been three bedrooms, each with its own closet, now became one continuous primary sanctuary. A dressing room occupies one end, the primary bathroom anchors the elbowed space at the other end, and the primary bedroom and Patty's office stretch between. Pocketing doors allow visual privacy or sight line sweep as desired.

The "great processional stair" retains its grandeur on the second level, too, as it terminates in a new gallery hall for David and Patty's collected artwork. The thickened gallery walls offer storage, and the hall ends in a secondary bath that serves guests when entertaining on the building's roof.

In the private rooms, the outer window walls are thickened as well to hide through-wall air conditioning units and new Runtal radiators. Here David, the avowed Modernist, indulges in a small nostalgic flourish—custom radiator grills waterjet cut into patterns suggestive of The Woodward's ornate entry columns. "It's a Spanish Colonial Revival building and there are very Baroque tripartite columns with terra cotta in them. They have great



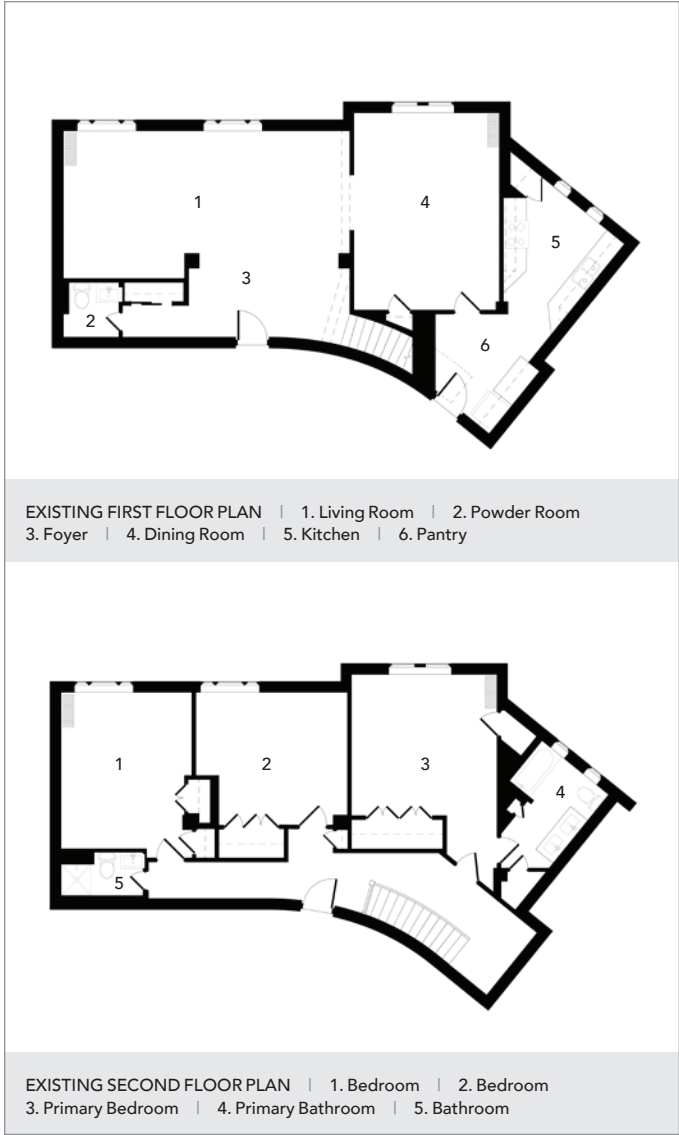
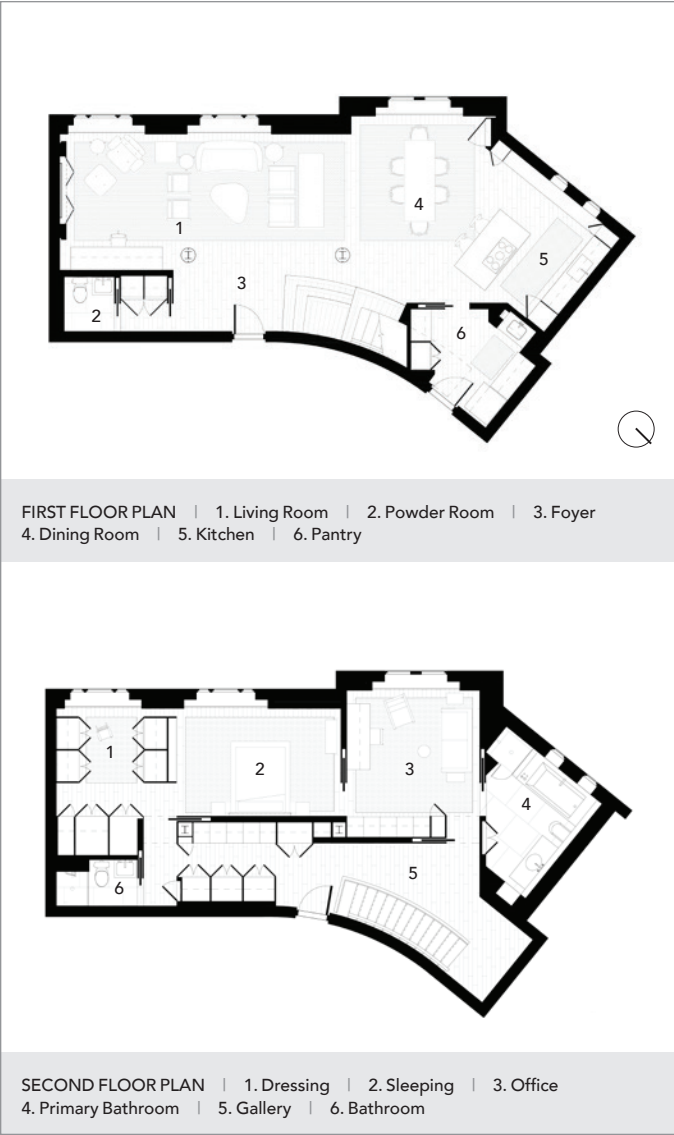
In the primary bath, the walnut veneer vanity and knife-edge granite surfacing harken to the great room's appointments, while the marbleized elements are a sumptuous large-format tile.

bases and column caps. We wanted to create some tie back to the original that was not too literal," he explains. "The bases are on the first level of the apartment and the capitals on the second, alluding to how they work on the exterior of the building and at about the same scale."

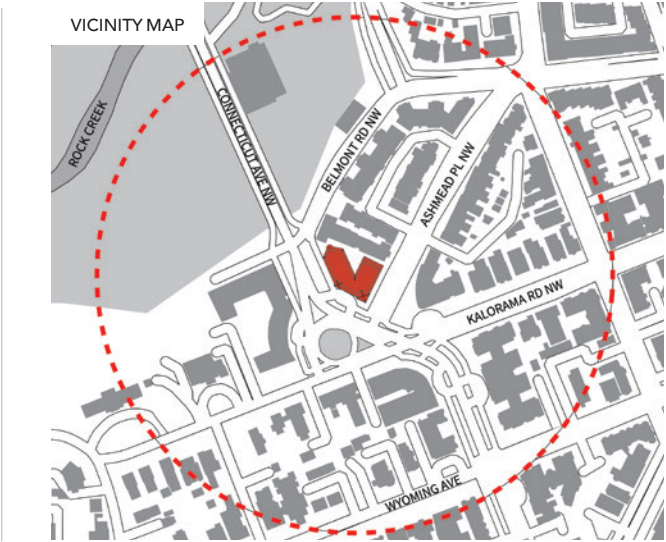
After a lifetime of designing multi-family buildings for others to occupy

and a decade of planning for this one special unit, David and his wife are exactly where they want to be—in a beautiful oasis overlooking the vibrant city they love. "I've never worked so hard on 2,000 square feet," he says. "You really sweat the details when you do modern, because there's no place to hide. But the rigor lends a serenity."—*S. Claire Conroy*





The period details of the building's interiors were largely lost in its first condo conversion, but David found inspiration for custom radiator grilles in the exterior's restored columns.





# Fire and Ice



1



2



3



4

## 1. ENVIABLE GREEN

We still recall the era of Harvest Gold, Pepto Pink, and Avocado appliances. True Residential offers an enviable new shade each year and for 2025 it's Olive (don't call it Avocado). Says the company, "Its earthy tones evoke a sensation of peace and stability." Both sorely needed these days.

[True-residential.com](https://true-residential.com)

## 2. COOKING WITHOUT GAS

This year's Kitchen & Bath Industry Show in Las Vegas offered some tantalizing glimpses of products in prototype, including this built-in electric barbecue and griddle from SMEG. Designed for outdoor and indoor use, it's in the maker's pipeline for the fall.

[smeg.com/us](https://smeg.com/us)

## 3. SUSPENDED ANIMATION

Both nostalgic and thoroughly modern at the same time, Ortal's new Oval fireplace sheds the boxy preconceptions of prefab. The 47-inch unit can be fully suspended or wall mounted, and is available as a direct vent or with power venting. More sizes are due in Q2.

[Ortalheat.com](https://ortalheat.com)

## 4. BIG FINNISH

Today's luxury lifestyle calls for more than just a home gym. Steam showers, saunas, and ice plunges are now de rigueur. This high design sauna from ThermaSol is lined in ash veneer and curvacious bench seating, lighted by LEDs, and warmed by an app-enabled Finnish heater and stones.

[Thermasol.com](https://thermasol.com)





Image Courtesy of Adam Reynolds Photography

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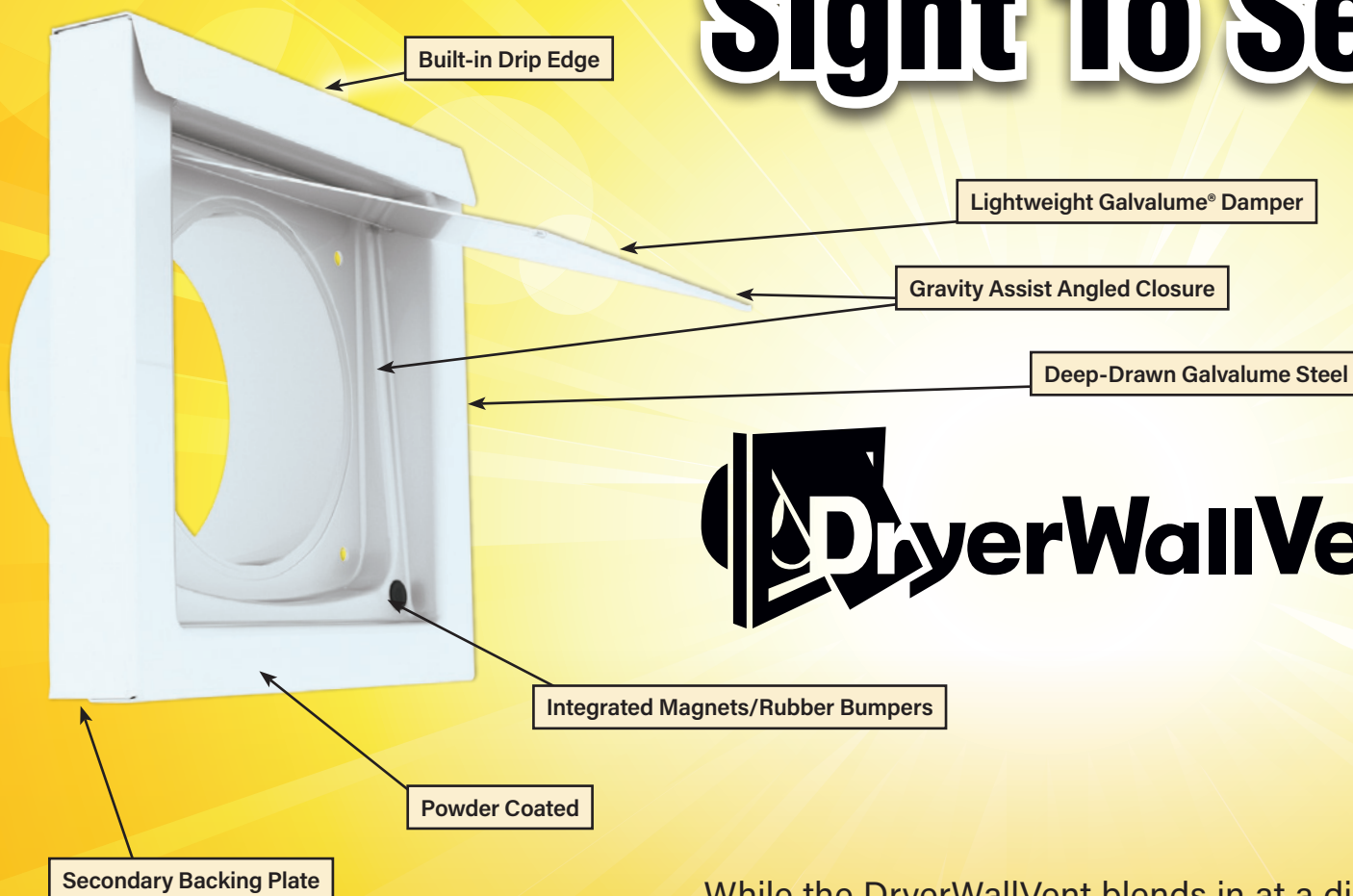
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## Flow State

BLAKELY RETREAT  
BLAKELY ISLAND, WASHINGTON  
WITTMAN ESTES

It's increasingly rare these days to find that perfect parcel of land for a view house—one that's easy to build on and easy to get to. At just under 10 acres, this site on Washington State's Blakely Island in the San Juan Archipelago is "one of the most beautiful we've ever worked on," says architect Matt Wittman, AIA, of Wittman Estes. But the rugged, heavily forested island has no commercial ferry service.

The firm's solution was to design a modular house that will be prefabricated offsite and then either helicoptered or barged—or both—to its perch. "It's a sensitive site—rocky and mossy—and virtually untouched. So we wanted to do something very simple and durable that sits very lightly in that environment," says Matt. "We don't want to build roads and disrupt the ecology."

The 1,700-square-foot house will rest its steel frame and SIPs panels on a pin foundation to avoid bulldozing rock and



to allow water to flow around and under the building. The long face, which contains the great room and kitchen, will stretch southeast, "where the sun is your friend," Matt notes. And nearly every window wall will open to catch breezes, forest sounds, and 360-degree water views.

A 400-square-foot, one-room guest house is also in the works, accessed by a winding landscaped path.

—S. Claire Conroy

Project: Blakely Retreat; architect: Matt Wittman, principal in charge; Brandon Patterson, project team, Wittman Estes, Seattle; builder: East West Custom Builders, Bellevue, Wash.; landscape architect: Jody Estes, Wittman Estes; project size: 1,700 square feet (main house), carport (600 square feet), guest house (400 square feet); site size: 9.89 acres; renderings: Wittman Estes.



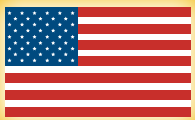
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