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RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

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OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 5, 2025

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On the Cover: Four Winds by Rolfs Elert Office.  
Photo: Stefan Radtke.





Welcome to Volume 5, 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@SOLAbands.com](mailto:Claire@SOLAbands.com).

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

# RD

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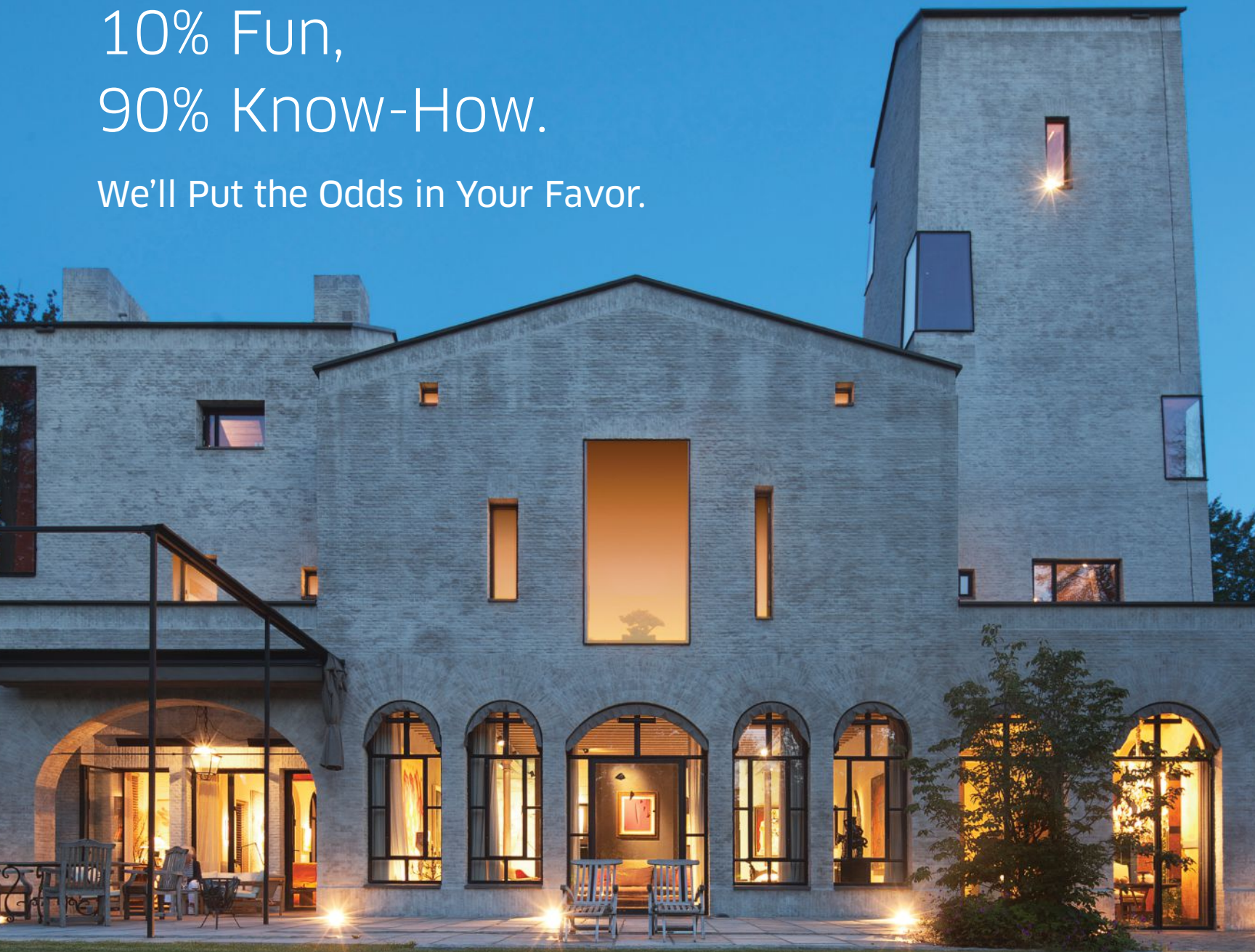
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## The Very Good House



**There's a house for sale** in my neighborhood. I've admired it for about a decade—ever since it was last on the market and I missed buying it by just a few months (when it was still affordable). There is something special about it, although there are bigger and fancier houses nearby. Indeed, because there are much larger and flashier houses close by, it stands apart with its quiet grace and self-assured competence. I am certain it was designed by an architect.

Even more surprising, it was built in 1981—not an era known for great residential architecture, especially for clients of middle-class means. Located on a close-in suburban site, it tucks into a hill on one side and next to a small ravine and stream on the other. The scheme is a trio of one-, two-, and three-story rectangular wood-clad boxes. The two- and three-story boxes are linked at the entry level by a continuous deck overlooking the ravine.

The two-story box contains the garage and a guest suite above. Across from it is the three-story main house with an upper level above the deck and a lower level below, bolstered by retaining walls. At the far end, a single-story, ground-level box connects to the main house through a screened breezeway.

Pulling apart the boxes creates the principal outdoor living area—much like a ship's deck—on the hilly site. There's another small deck at ground level, occupying a spot just above the stream and next to a pond and fountain.

The interiors take advantage of the level changes, too, with lofted spaces, partial walls, and windows and skylights placed at strategic points. Moving through the buildings reveals a new, interesting sight line at every turn, because at every turn the buildings get out of their own way to focus on the views.

The real estate listing calls it a Midcentury house, which is wrong, of course. (And when did Midcentury become a milquetoast synonym for modern?) It's something even more rare—it's a mountain house in the city, an everyman's Fallingwater. Likely it could not be built again so close to a stream, but it didn't really need the stream—it needed the hill and the humility to let it shine.

At its heart, this very good house is also a “Not So Big House,” as Sarah Susanka so memorably dubbed the soulful houses that emphasize quality of space over quantity. It's a solid example of the core principles she put forth in her book of the same name nearly 30 years ago. For architects, builders, and especially their clients, “The Not So Big House” and its companion website at [www.susanka.com](http://www.susanka.com) are wonderful reminders of what constitutes an enriching, gratifying, human-scaled house. Not every house can be great, but so many could be much, much better.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

S. Claire Conroy  
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# Building Community Through Custom Publishing

BY MARICA MCKEEL, AIA, AND MARISA KAUGARS, ASSOC. AIA

When we launched Valley MMag in 2023, we had a simple goal: create an affordable way for local creative businesses to showcase their work in print. Two years and eight issues later, our magazine has evolved into a collaborative partnership with local artists and makers.

We've always been passionate about working in the Hudson Valley. We're surrounded by deeply talented creatives—artists, designers, chefs, gallerists, entrepreneurs—all producing stunning work that deserves to be seen in print. For many of us, the problem was cost. Even business card-sized ads in local publications are prohibitively expensive for most contributors, and showcasing work more substantially in print often comes with astronomical costs.

Dissatisfied with our options and craving greater control over how our work was presented, we saw an opportunity to serve our community while marketing our own services. Since our clientele overlaps with that of many small businesses and artists in the area, creating a more tangible connection with those proprietors also made perfect sense from a business development perspective. We began with a smaller first issue—10 contributors, each of whom we already knew personally, showcased in two to six pages, with a 10-page feature interview with a beloved local artist and entrepreneur.

From the beginning, we focused on targeted distribution rather than chasing traditional metrics. Every contributor receives copies for their clients and businesses, and we distribute strategically at like-minded venues and two annual Hudson Valley events—Upstate

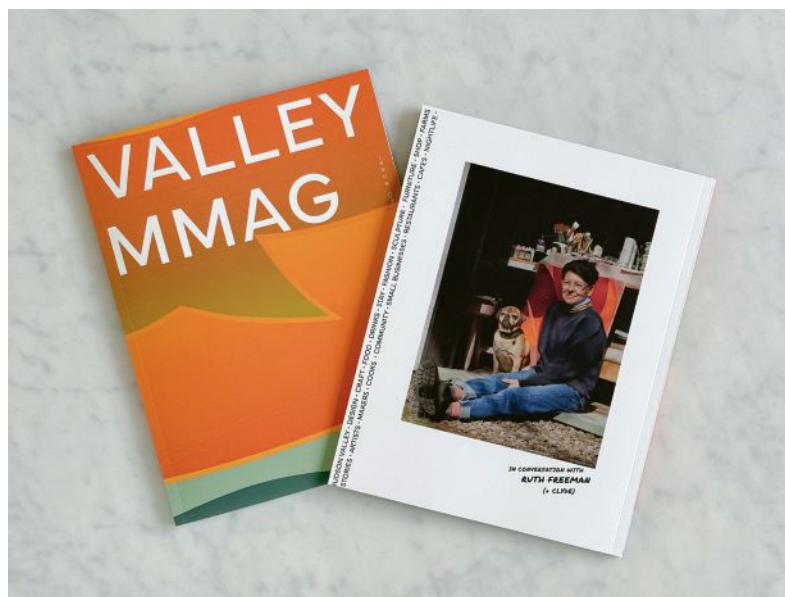
Art Weekend, a major five-day summer art festival, and Field + Supply, a modern fall craft fair. Both events draw heavily from New York City.

Valley MMag has evolved significantly since our first issues. We started with a primarily visual approach—minimal text, lots of beautiful photography, and one central feature interview highlighting a local artist or business. We've since discovered that some of our contributors enjoy writing, and that we enjoyed having meaningful conversations with other business owners. Recent issues include longer articles and more substantial spreads, though we've maintained the visual focus that readers respond to. Critically, the financial model we've landed on keeps the barrier low for contributors while ensuring quality production. Participants pay reasonable contribution fees, while larger, more es-

tablished businesses with Hudson Valley ties sponsor the magazine and help us cover printing and publishing costs.

We also shifted our publishing schedule after the first year and a half. Four seasonal issues was too much to manage while running our architecture practice, so starting this year, we moved to two more substantial bi-annual publications aligned with key cultural moments in our region. This allowed us to create more focused, impactful content while being realistic about our capacity.

The most successful evolution has been how we feature our own work. We've developed what we think of as a collaborative lens—showcasing our projects through the relationships and partnerships that make them possible. Our most recent Spring/Summer issue had an expanded centerfold article featuring Ruth Freeman, a talented artist



Photos: Courtesy Studio MM Architect

Studio MM publishes a local magazine showcasing its creative community and clients.



whose home and studio we designed. The piece included a feature on the home, called Art Fort, and a lengthy interview with Ruth, but we were also excited to showcase the home's millwork team and furniture maker, both critical to the project's success. Additionally, Art Fort was part of this year's Upstate Art Weekend, so we strategically published just ahead of the event to help generate interest.

This strategy works particularly well in the Hudson Valley's art-based community, where creative collaboration is both common and deeply valued. The response to the last issue was overwhelmingly positive—Ruth was thrilled to pass out the magazine to visitors during the weekend, and we felt like we had finally successfully showcased how collaborative and interconnected our community truly is. The issue featured 20 contributors, had three sponsors, and, in addition to the feature on Art Fort, included three articles on artists and galleries in the Hudson Valley.

Valley MMag requires significant effort—between coordinating layouts



with contributors, managing editorial calendars, working with our printer, and handling distribution, it's become a substantial part of our practice. However, the connections we've continued to build have been invaluable. The ultimate validation came recently when someone we'd never met mentioned that they are collecting every issue and are eagerly awaiting the next one. We've even had clients ask us how they can subscribe to the magazine—and while a subscription model is a little bit beyond our bandwidth, that organic enthusiasm tells us we're creating something with genuine value beyond our business interests.

For other residential architects considering something similar, we'd strongly suggest starting with authentic connection rather than pure business development. Valley MMag works because it serves our community first, with business benefits as a natural byproduct. We were already embedded in this creative ecosystem, so creating a platform to celebrate it felt genuine rather than opportunistic. Finding overlap between our clientele and featured businesses was also critical—when potential

clients see us collaborating with makers and artists they already know and respect, it builds credibility that paid ads can't match.

We've also learned that quality beats quantity. Thoughtful placement at relevant events and locations has been far more valuable than chasing broad circulation numbers. Most importantly, we've stayed responsive to feedback. The shift toward more text-based content happened because we listened to contributors and readers, rather than sticking to our original vision.

Valley MMag has taught us that custom publishing can simultaneously serve community building, business development, and brand positioning. In residential architecture, where relationships drive referrals, that kind of community investment pays dividends far beyond any traditional advertising budget.

*Marica McKeel, AIA, is founder and principal of Studio MM Architect, and Marisa Kaugars, Assoc. AIA, is studio manager, creative director, and a project manager at the firm.*







Photos: Haris Kenjar

Photos: Courtesy Mowery Marsh



Architects Jennifer Mowery Marsh, AIA, and Brian Marsh, AIA.

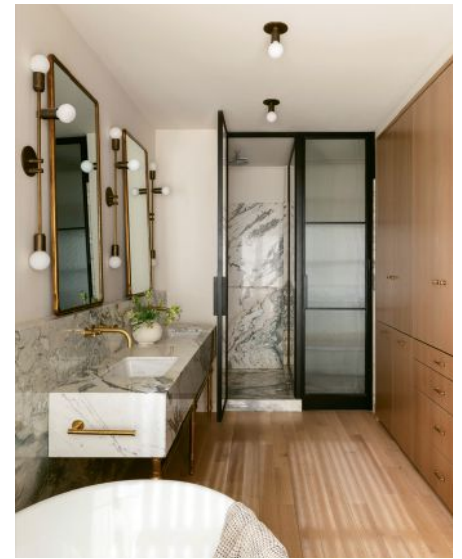
## Actively Passive

MOWERY MARSH ARCHITECTS  
HOBOKEN, NEW JERSEY

**When clients hire** Mowery Marsh Architects, they deal exclusively with Jennifer Mowery Marsh, AIA, and Brian Marsh, AIA. The husband-and-wife team, based in Hoboken, New Jersey, work on all their projects without the help of staff or interns. “It’s just the two of us, and from the beginning, we’re thinking about every aspect of the project and the budget. Our projects are very cohesive, from energy efficiency to the paint colors of the powder room,” says Jennifer.

Like Kendall Roy’s cashmere baseball cap, these homes are quietly luxurious. The firm takes on two to four new clients a year and works on 10 to 12 projects at a time; the typical project is 4,000 square feet, with a budget of \$2 million and up. Half are gut renovations, and half are new builds upstate. But all are designed to meet Passive House requirements, the gold standard for energy-efficient construction, in which homes are tightly sealed and heavily insulated. After renovating dozens of brownstones, Jennifer and Brian have become skilled at re-creating period charm while incorpo-





The firm advised their Barrow Street Passive client to buy “the worst house on the best street,” then completely transformed the 1880s brownstone.

rating modern functionality within a limited footprint. “A lot of times people think we restore buildings, because they look period,” says Jennifer. Even their new builds are also grounded in spatial efficiency of the past. “Because we’ve done so many renovations, when we do a new build, we’re always thinking of the scale and sensibilities of townhouses,” says Jennifer. “They feel really nice, are easy to furnish, and are at the scale of people. We’ll put the size of stair that we use in a townhome to infuse that charm into a new build.”

Both principals are personal fans of city living, after growing up in relatively isolated, car-intensive settings—Brian in the suburbs of Wilmington, Delaware; Jennifer in rural Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Jennifer’s mother was interested in art and fashion and owned a bridal store. Jennifer’s father sold concrete and built the family house, a brick Cape Cod. “Quality construction was very important to him. He would talk about spalling concrete and why it would fail,” recalls Jennifer. Brian’s father had an entrepreneurial spirit.



After working at a bank for many years, he turned his hobby of stamp collecting into a successful business. “That gave me the confidence that I could run a business too,” says Brian.

After discovering an early aptitude for art, they both went to Penn State to study architecture in the early 1990s. During freshman year, they got to know

each other as desk partners in design studio. “We shared a 60-inch-long desk, but then Brian installed a 42-inch parallel rule, and so it began,” recalls Jennifer. The program at the large state school offered flexibility. “The nice thing about Penn State is that it allowed you to focus on whatever you wanted to focus on,” says Brian. But it also gave





Jennifer a case of impostor syndrome: “My feeling was, ‘I don’t know if I’m really cut out for this,’” she says. “They kept showing us these reference images of Eisenman, Gehry—iconic designs by big male egos.”

In time, she came to realize that nobody in their class fit the stereotype.

After graduation, Jennifer worked for a few different firms, including Davis Brody Bond, known for its civic



and cultural projects. In 2004, after becoming a mother, she launched her own firm to have more flexibility. She began working on renovations for families in Hoboken and other New York City bedroom communities. “It was easy for me to connect with women who wanted to renovate their houses,” she recalls. “They appreciated that we cared about maximizing storage and making spaces that were great for families. And there weren’t many practices [in the area] that were full-service architects.” Over a decade, she grew the business slowly, to the point where she was regularly



Photos: Harris Kenjar

turning away new clients; Brian came on board in 2013.

### Cocooning Trend

In the meantime, Brian, who was working for renowned residential architect Dennis Wedlick, FAIA, had been introduced to Passive House. When the market crashed in 2007, Wedlick took advantage of the downtime to focus on it. In 2011, the couple renovated their own Hoboken townhouse, gunning for Passive House. “Jen was like, ‘If we’re really going to make this part of our firm, we need to live it,’” says Brian,



Chatham Passive Homestead was designed as a guest house and party space on 150 acres in New York’s Hudson Valley. The clients liked the 2,500-square-foot, barnlike building so much, they moved in.





AZEK Alpine WP4 in Auburn

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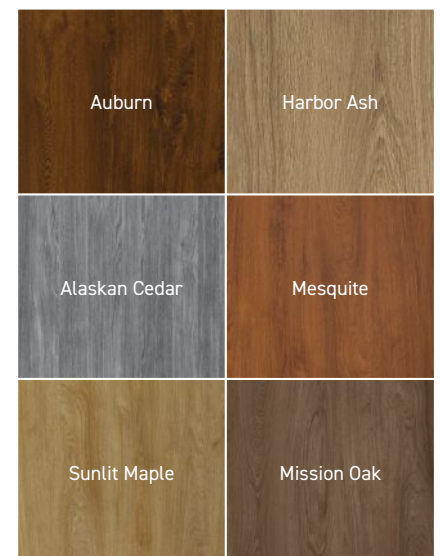
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noting that Passive House renovations are a challenge distinct from new builds. “We didn’t hit the actual standard, but we understood the problems that come up, and what we had to look out for. So the next project we did, we did tremendously better.”

After the fourth renovation, they were able to hit the actual Passive House targets; today, they work with a handful of contractors and are confident enough to work with those who haven’t built a Passive House before but are willing to try. To ensure that projects are built properly, the architects always tell contractors that they’re going for certification. “Then the builder can’t make deviations,” says Brian.

After living in their own almost-but-not-quite Passive House for more than a decade, the two can’t say enough about the joys of living in an exceptionally quiet, clean, and comfortable environment. “We have this cocoon-like environment in the middle of this bustling city,” says Jennifer. “Having lived here for almost 30 years, we’ve come to realize that the most environmentally conscious approach to home construction is to transform existing homes into Passive Houses for the next generation.” Adds Brian, “Once you



For the York Street Passive remodel, the architects designed a separate core volume. On the two floors above, they pulled the hallway away from the volume, creating a slim light well and bridge-like walkways.



know Passive, you can’t go back to regular construction. You know all the sins that are out there and how scary it is for moisture and mold and those things.” It is an easy sell to their clients as well, he says. “We ask, ‘Do you want clean, fresh filtered air inside your house? Do you want it to be quiet?’ And they say yes.”

It’s interesting to note that, while the standard has been dinged for perceived design limitations, it has become an integral part of the Mowery Marsh

aesthetic. The thickened walls—20 inches thick in new builds—are a draw for their clients. “That depth of form has become a big part of the look of our work,” notes Jennifer. “We design deep recesses for windows and large expanses of glass that are really thermally comfortable. We would feel uncomfortable doing that if you couldn’t sit by that big window in the middle of winter. That’s something you can’t show in pictures—it’s beautiful, but it also feels really amazing and not drafty.”





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## Behind the Scenes

To get a better sense of the firm's comprehensive renovations, Barrow Street Passive is a good case study. The architects counseled client Cara Murphy to buy the "worst house on the best street," as Cara puts it, and invest money in the renovation instead. Cara found a scarily dilapidated brownstone in Jersey City, New Jersey, dating back to the 1880s. The architects did a gut renovation, replacing the floor joists and the stairs, and extended the back of the house with a three-level addition, for a total of 4,300 square feet. While building back the interiors, they designed discrete places to tuck in new mechanical systems and additional storage, using those elements to define separate rooms. "We're shaping space into volumes," says Jennifer. "Traditionally you would have done that, instead of blowing out the whole thing into one big room."

Located in a historic district, the home's façade had to be period-appropriate. The architects found robust triple-paned tilt-turn windows that resembled single-pane double-hung ones, and detailed them accordingly. "We bury the frames into the wall behind the brick as much as possible, and work with the manufacturer to design muntin profiles that are sized and shaped like historic windows," explains Brian. They also added streamlined crown molding and other period details to the more public spaces downstairs. "It's a nod to a traditional home, but a more modern, clean version," says Jennifer. "These houses aren't very big, so keeping the details more refined makes them feel bigger."

Showcasing their ability to create a pitch-perfect replica of the past, Chatham Passive Homestead looks like nothing else but a vintage barn that has been adaptively reused. The 2,500-square-foot new build occupies a 150-acre property in New York's Hudson Valley. "It's so advanced, but



Photos: Mike Van Tassel



Fern Hill, a retreat in the Poconos, is a modern take on cabincore. Its three gabled volumes feature vaulted ceilings with exposed timber rafters. "Even though it has grand spaces, the footprint is very efficient because it feels better that way," says Jennifer.

**"These houses aren't very big, so keeping the details more refined makes them feel bigger"**

—Jennifer Mowery Marsh, AIA

reminiscent of traditional architecture," says Jennifer. The "barn" has timber beams and rafters that are partially structural, and the heavily insulated, stone-veneered walls have deep chamfered window jambs—just as if they were created by punching holes through old stone walls.

On the more contemporary side of their portfolio is Fern Hill, a

4,100-square-foot lake house in the Poconos. Inspired by the old cabin that was on the property, the house has three gables, designed to give each of the three major spaces—primary bedroom, living room, den—a lake view. There's a covered porch which is separated from the rest of the house by a glass accordion wall, allowing the house to open up in good weather—refuting the idea that a Passive House home has to be hermetically sealed. "It actually can be quite open air," says Jennifer. "A lot of folks have this feeling that Passive House must be contemporary or have a certain aesthetic. And we're like, 'Nope, we can make any house Passive.'"

—Lydia Lee





THE ART OF THE STAIR





## Historic Dutch Gable

RICHARDSON PRIBUSS ARCHITECTS  
MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Since 1912, the shingled Craftsman residence with the graceful Dutch gable has risen above the roads bounding its nearly two-thirds of an acre site in Mill Valley, California. Over time, the footprint of the once-summer home was expanded to 6,250 square feet, but many details remained from its original build. Among those details were locally sourced white oak wall paneling throughout the living areas; a fireplace with a hand-carved wood overmantel; decorative interior Corinthian columns; and leaded stained glass windows. The windows were commissioned

by the original owner, a World War I veteran, and depict the military divisions that fought in the Meuse-Argonne offensive in France.

After about five years of living in the home, which is listed in the Historical Resource Inventory of Mill Valley, its current owner wanted to update the interior and layout to accommodate their family's lifestyle. However, they were sensitive to retaining the craftsmanship and character of materials integrated in the structure's literal and figurative framework, says Heidi Richardson, principal at Richardson Pribuss Architects.





Richardson Pribuss selected both modern and vintage furnishings and lighting to complement such original details as the oak woodwork and leaded stained glass windows. Brass fixtures and tie-dye textiles augment the sense of craftsmanship.

“We wanted to keep the integrity and history of the original building, provide easier indoor-outdoor access. And the second floor had no heat, so we added heat.”

### Layout Refinement

Over time, the family had adapted several rooms for their activities. The formal dining room became a meditation space, and the wood-paneled living room became a media space with a drop-down screen. As a result, the renovation left many rooms as is but updated lighting and finishes.

Nonetheless, the few layout changes made by the architects had an outsized impact, particularly in the rear northeast addition. “That whole ... back area was a mess,” Heidi says. On the main level, an interior passageway spanning

the addition’s width was tight, crammed with storage and a small powder room. By widening the footprint and borrowing underutilized space from an adjacent mechanical area, the firm created a more spacious powder room, an inviting pass-through between the north and south gardens, and a small work area with outdoor views.

In the addition’s second level, the existing primary bath was experiencing water infiltration and had to be rebuilt. That gave the architects the opportunity to rework its layout entirely. A dated tiled bathtub was replaced with a standalone tub, and its adjacent window, which faced a main street, was filled in with vertical wall tile. Laundry facilities were relocated to a guest bathroom. On the north wall, windows were added above the double vanity to





open up direct views of Marin County's Mount Tamalpais, which "is a big deal here," Heidi notes. Custom vanity mirrors slide horizontally out of the line of sight to reveal the windows and breathtaking views beyond.

Against the south wall, a new sauna and tiled shower open out to a private deck and garden through a glass door and curtain wall.

### Refined Atmospheres

Considering the verdant setting, textural gardens, and soaring oaks surrounding the house, which was once called "Two Oaks" for the trees flanking its entry, the design team chose deep blue tones for the kitchen and soft greens, natural wood, and plaster for the reimagined primary bath.



The modified kitchen layout enables family gatherings at the island and custom banquette. Brass light fixtures and a burnished brass hood help convey the passage of time.

To acknowledge the house's original construction during the Industrial Revolution, the architects added industrial elements in the kitchen. Dramatic brass wall sconces highlight the white quartzite working surfaces and backsplash, and an asymmetrical, burnished brass hood stands out from surrounding white oak cabinetry. The builder, Joe McGuire, helped the architects find someone who could achieve the desired look of the hood patina, Heidi says.



Richardson Pribuss added a breakfast nook tucked into the kitchen to support family gatherings and designed a custom white oak banquette and table to complement the owner's existing chairs and a new limestone tile floor.

### Natural Tendencies

With their high regard for their home's history, the client eschewed plastic products and materials due to their



Some existing windows were replaced to regain operability and meet life-safety requirements. New glazing in the primary bath increases daylight access and the quality of views.



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homogeneity and unchanging appearance over time. Instead, they opted for “natural materials that showed variation in color, texture, and finish, and left all the plumbing and hardware unlacquered so they would age and patina with the house,” says Richardson Pribuss designer Danielle Velasco. “All of these choices help marry the new parts of the house with the historical parts.”

Copper and brass appear throughout the house in fixtures, lighting, hardware, and even a joint detail between the tile and drywall of a secondary bath. These pops of warmth help strike “a balance between more modern elements and more vintage pieces,” Heidi says. Concrete sinks and bathtubs in the bathrooms add another tactile material to the natural palette.

### Envelope Improvements

Outside, each wood shingle cladding the home’s extensive walls and deck rails was inspected for its integrity; Heidi estimates about 20% were replaced. The project also replaced several inoperable upper-level windows with energy-efficient, metal-clad wood windows that meet modern egress requirements for life safety.

Additionally, an energy-efficient gas boiler and tankless water heater improve the performance of the house. Overall, the project’s light touch elevated the home’s comfortable, domestic feel, Heidi says. “It feels authentic. That’s what I like best about the project.”

—Wanda Lau

## Historic Dutch Gable

Mill Valley, California

### PROJECT CREDITS

**ARCHITECT:** Heidi Richardson and Andrew Pribuss, design principals and project architects; Danielle E. Velasco, designer, Richardson Pribuss Architects, Mill Valley, California

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Kelly Turbin, Turbin Structural Engineering, Mill Valley

**CONTRACTOR:** Joe McGuire, McGuire and Sons, San Rafael, California

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Hsiaochien Chuang, Studio H2, San Francisco

**PROJECT SIZE:** 6,250 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.63 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Eric Rorer, Suzanna Scott

### KEY PRODUCTS

**APPLIANCES:** Gaggenau (refrigerator/freezer, dishwasher)

**COUNTERTOP:** IRG (kitchen)

**DOOR HARDWARE:** Rocky Mountain Hardware

**EXTERIOR SIDING:** Wood shingle

**FAUCETS:** Kallista (kitchen), Waterworks (primary and secondary baths, powder room)

**FLOORING:** Teak (primary suite and secondary bathroom), Douglas fir (secondary bedrooms), oak (existing, main house); Haussman Natural Stone (kitchen and bathroom)

**FURNITURE:** L.Gandsley (kitchen table); eSSa Studios (kitchen banquette); Misia (seatback fabric); Moore & Giles (seat leather)

**HOOD:** B Metal Fabrication

**LIGHTING:** Apparatus (living room; primary

bath); Roman & Williams Guild (breakfast table pendant); Workstead (kitchen sconces); Allied Maker (stair); Bianco Light + Space

**MILLWORK:** Whitewashed white oak (kitchen)

**PAINT:** C2 Paint (kitchen)

**RUG:** Loloi Rugs (primary bedroom); Lulu and Georgia (kitchen runner)

**SINK:** Blanco (kitchen); Sonoma Cast Stone (primary and secondary baths); IRG (powder room)

**TILE:** Clé Tile (primary and secondary baths)

**TOILET:** TOTO

**TUB:** Victoria + Albert (primary bath); Waterworks (secondary baths)

**WALLPAPER:** Gregorius Pineo (powder room outside wall, upstairs landing/hall)

**WINDOWS:** Marvin; Jada Windows (primary bath window wall)





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# *Make space* for labors of love

Architect Scott Landry had his work cut out for him, remodeling a home to make the most of its coastal view for his brother from New York. With a less-than-optimal landscape to work with, Landry took the opportunity to modernize the dwelling from the inside out—adding a new office space and re-situating the backyard to better accommodate his brother’s remote work habits.



With a coastal Californian climate that radiates heat and moisture, the existing structure’s aluminum window frames had failed to keep the extreme winds and humidity at bay. This made for less-than-comfortable summer days in the main living space. Better insulation was a must-have, but sacrificing the panoramic seaside vista was out of the question. Landry knew that comfort would be a priority for the wide array of guests and family that would soon fill the space.

“There are maybe 60 windows in this house. And we needed the right product. One that was resilient on the outside. One that had thin lines to maximize the view.”

— Scott Landry, Studio 101 Designs



## **BROTHER KNOWS BEST**

Landry searched high and low for the right windows to maintain the home’s existing look, match the exterior and interior colors, and perform better on the West Coast. Selections from the Marvin Ultimate product line were the only choice that met Landry’s standards. With a wealth of natural light now illuminating the home, he was free to reimagine how the kitchen and surrounding spaces interacted.



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# Begin Again

A historic stone house moves into the future alongside vestiges of its past.

BY CHERYL WEBER

FOUR WINDS

ARCHITECT: ROLFS ELERT OFFICE

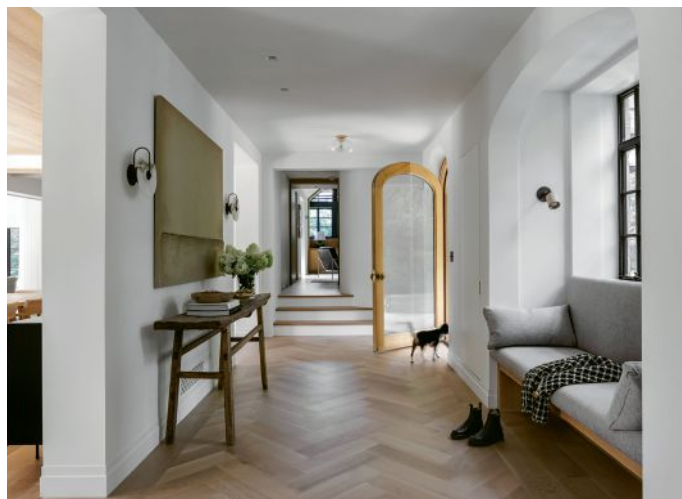
BUILDER: TALLMAN BUILDING COMPANY

LOCATION: DARIEN, CONNECTICUT

**With their proximity to** New York City, Connecticut's coastal towns have long attracted wealthy families who built distinctive stone houses on pastoral tracts of land. Some of these structures were the work of architect and master stone mason Frazier Forman Peters, who reportedly built 41 homes in Westport alone between 1924 and 1936. One example of his work, in nearby Darien, attracted Rudi Elert's clients a few years ago. Although it was designed by local architect Calvin Kiessling,







Peters built the stately house with a slate roof, copper gutters, steel casement windows, and bronze screens, laying the masonry in a pioneering style he described in “House of Stone,” a treatise on stone construction.

Rudi’s clients, a young couple without children at the time, purchased it from an older couple who had lived there for many years. The clients moved in only briefly before renovations began—they had an apartment in New York City and decamped to the country with some friends when the pandemic hit. “They turned it into a kind of WeWork space for their friends,” says Rudi, AIA. “Once we broke ground, they left the house.”

Built in 1931, the two-story structure was modest. It included a one-story office appendage on the front, topped with the later addition of a primary bedroom. A one-story living room extended from the back of the house on the same side. Upstairs were four more bedrooms, including a guest suite over the street-facing garage, which formed an L-shaped footprint. Although the clients liked the old stone architecture, the interior had low ceilings and a choppy floor plan. They requested a five-bedroom house in which to raise their future family, including a big dining room where they could host extended-family gatherings.

“The project became more and more ambitious through the design process and into construction,” says Rudi. “In the end we could only salvage the masonry portion of building, but we took a lot of design cues from the original house. It’s essentially new construction with vestiges of the old stone building.”

Behind the entryway (top) is the new dining room (above) and refurbished two-part living room that juts out toward the back. Some of its ceiling beams were preserved and the paneling reportioned.





### Clean Sweep

Houses like this often require a molting process. Here it shed the addition above the office, along with the muddled footprint. The new scheme extends the horizontal massing to the left, or south, as a rectangular two-story structure, creating gracious living and entertaining spaces on the main level, with the bedrooms concentrated above. “It was important to keep the integrity of the existing house, no rooflines taller and everything else subordinate,” Rudi says. The cleavage between the original house and the new building mass becomes clear at the central staircase, which was flipped front to back but is in roughly the same location as the old one. Here in the stair hall, the character of the former exterior stone wall is on full display, and everything to the left of the wall is new.



The dining room (top left) is separate from the kitchen, which forms a knuckle between the conservatory-like breakfast room (below) and family room (next page).







“The clients wanted to accentuate as much of the existing stone architecture as we could,” Rudi says. “We kept the stone wall planes predominantly in the three-story circulation knuckle. We put the addition against that wall, extruding the main mass and creating a vertical circulation gap between the old and new.”



Maintaining its original position on the northwest, the living room looks across a rear terrace to a new family room volume and porch that projects out behind the kitchen. In front, the garage was rebuilt with a three-car bay facing south, away from the front door, which allowed for a private family entrance. “We flipped the garage access to create a motor court in the back of the garage,” Rudi explains. “Daily living occurs on the left, and they see the car court as a play court for their kids—there are good sight lines.”

Upstairs, the primary suite sits atop the family room addition. Separated from the couple’s quarters by the stair hall, two more bedrooms inhabit the old part of the house on the north, and two more are situated above the garage. A partial basement contains a wine room, sauna and changing room, bath, bunk room, and gym.

Achieving this sense of spaciousness required a major excavation and a complete reframing of the house and roof. “There was an extensive amount of ledge,” says builder Bill Manderville. Blasting into bedrock, “we dug the basement 17 feet below the existing footings while underpinning the foundation.” They also lowered the first floor about 14 inches to achieve taller ceilings, raised the roof 6 inches on the second floor, and created vaulted areas on both levels.

New opportunities arose as the demolition progressed, and the project grew in substance. “It was a cascading effect,” Rudi says. “Once we realized the windows wouldn’t meet energy performance standards, we had the opportunity to raise the roof and put new windows in bigger openings. The window heads had been squat, maybe 8 feet. The client is tall, and we raised the second-floor window datum. As we got into lowering the floor and raising the ceilings, we had to reframe all the rooms to support the new roof. And we went through many program iterations to get the adjacencies right. Almost until construction started, we were flipping the orientation of



Top: A new family room faces the existing living room across a stone terrace. Above: The architects exposed the office’s original roofline after removing the addition above it.





the kitchen to better address the site around the house. Once we got through those decisions, it was smooth sailing.”

### Well Manored

The living room is one of the few rooms that retained its existing volume. Although the window openings were expanded to the floor, the team preserved the fireplace, some of the decorative beams, and the two seating areas defined by a flat ceiling and a vaulted space. The office footprint and walls also remained, but after the bedroom addition above was removed, it received a vaulted ceiling. Its roofline matches the trace of the old roofline they could see on the exterior. And the office’s leaky, leaded glass windows were recycled and replaced in kind.

“The original house was quite simple and austere; it didn’t have crown moldings, and the trim pieces were rough cut, so the new detailing took cues from the old,” says Rudi. The updates included tapered brackets on the posts and some of the windows and doors, which lend an agrarian feel. A palette

of steel windows, plaster walls, and white oak imparts a clean and inviting vibe. These were detailed as plaster HVAC diffusers in the ceiling, rabbeted oak door jambs with plaster returns, herringbone-pattern flooring in the entry and primary bath, and oak casings within large openings and on select ceilings. The welcoming dining room the couple requested sits behind the entry hall where a sunroom once stood, its trio of French doors opening to the pool garden.

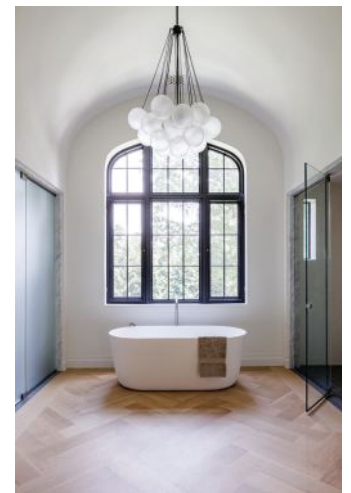
Stunning yet understated, the entry hall’s cascading staircase looks designed to ease the formerly urban couple into country-house life. Its curvaceous raised stringer holds bronze balusters—simple dowels—and a mahogany handrail. A full-length window at the end of the first- and second-floor stair halls accentuates the dividing line between old and new. “At first, the wife thought the big windows would be too contemporary, but they’re reined in by oak beams,” Rudi says. “As it evolved, the balance of contemporary elements with traditional elements like wood and heavy stone worked for them.” A skylight on the top floor sits flush with the slate roof, illuminating the stairwell all the way to the basement.

On the first floor of the addition, the core living spaces—kitchen, breakfast room, and family room—are separate but visually connected: the kitchen acts as a hinge between the family room and the conservatory-like breakfast room that bumps out on the south. “It’s not a particularly open concept, but there are adjacencies,” Rudi says. “They wanted separation between the kitchen and dining room, but the breakfast room is an important space for them.”

A study in light and serenity, the kitchen has bleached walnut cabinetry, a plastered ventilation hood, and a quartzite backsplash and countertops. White laminate cabinets in the back kitchen, directly behind the range, are combined with zellige-tiled walls. “The kettle bell lights were the wife’s choice,” Rudi says. “She had a family history with the kitchen designer and picked many of the light fixtures, tiles, and soft goods.”

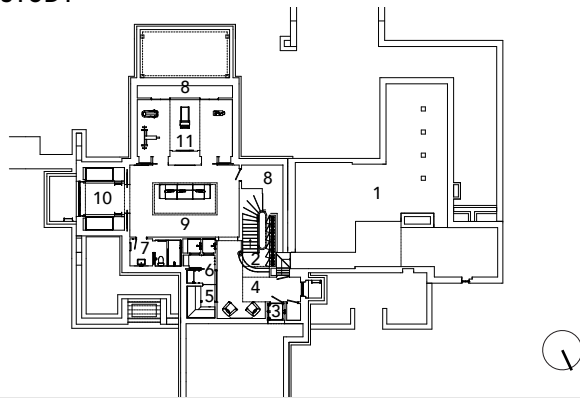


Original exterior stone and a full-height window (top) delineate old and new. Sloped ceilings in the primary suite impart a sense of being under the roof.

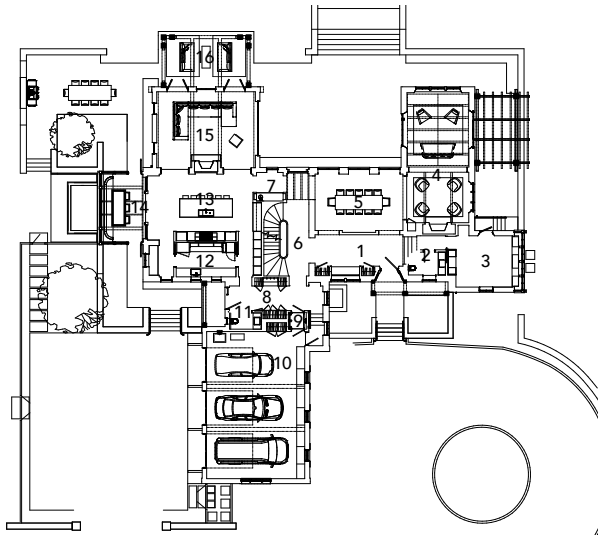




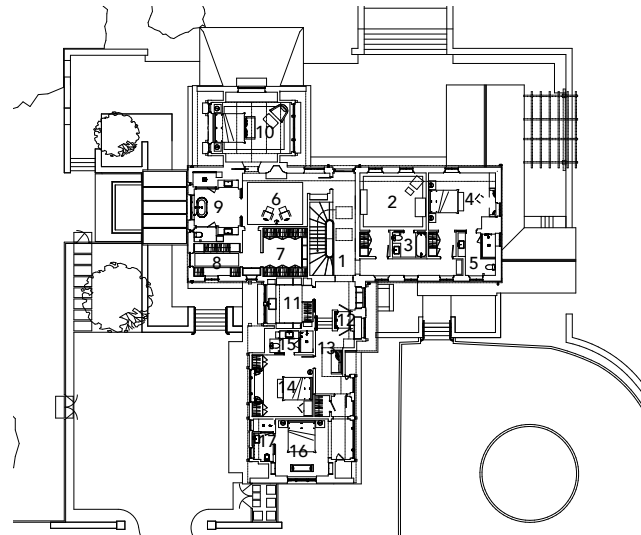
## CASE STUDY



**BASEMENT PLAN** | 1. Existing Basement | 2. Wine Storage | 3. Elevator  
4. Lounging Area | 5. Sauna | 6. Changing Room | 7. Basement Bathroom  
8. Mechanical Closet | 9. Sitting Area | 10. Bunkroom | 11. Gym



**FIRST-FLOOR PLAN** | 1. Entry Hall | 2. Powder Room | 3. Office  
4. Living Room | 5. Dining Room | 6. Stair Hall | 7. Butlers' Bar  
8. Mudroom | 9. Elevator | 10. Garage | 11. Powder Room  
12. Laundry/Pantry | 13. Kitchen | 14. Breakfast Room | 15. Family Room | 16. Porch



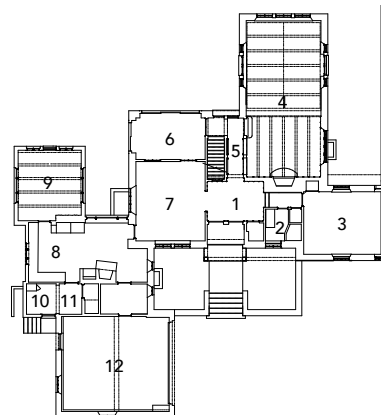
**SECOND-FLOOR PLAN** | 1. Stair Hall | 2. Bedroom 1 | 3. Bathroom 1  
4. Bedroom 2 | 5. Bathroom 2 | 6. Primary Sitting | 7. Dressing 1  
8. Dressing 2 | 9. Primary Bathroom | 10. Primary Bedroom  
11. Laundry Room | 12. Elevator | 13. Rear Hall | 14. Bedroom 3  
15. Bathroom 3 | 16. Guest Bedroom | 17. Guest Bathroom



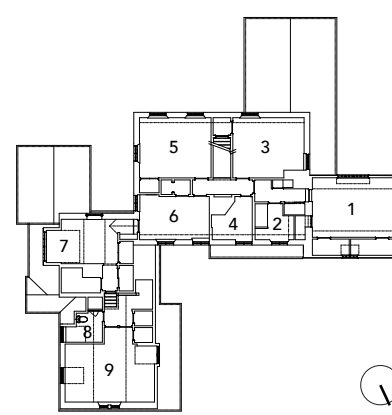
**BEFORE**



**BEFORE**



**EXISTING FIRST-FLOOR PLAN** | 1. Entry  
2. Bathroom | 3. Office | 4. Living Room  
5. Hall | 6. Sunroom | 7. Dining Room  
8. Kitchen | 9. Breakfast Room | 10. Laundry Room  
11. Mudroom | 12. Garage



**EXISTING SECOND-FLOOR PLAN**  
1. Primary Bedroom | 2. Primary Bathroom  
3. Bedroom 1 | 4. Bathroom | 5. Bedroom 2  
6. Gym | 7. Bedroom 3 | 8. Guest Bathroom  
9. Guest Bedroom



Almost all the second-story rooms have vaulted ceilings. “One of the things they liked about the old house was the feeling of being under the roof and the sloped character of these vaulted spaces,” Rudi recalls. The primary suite includes a sitting area with a fireplace that they envisioned as a flexible nursery. Nearby is a well-appointed laundry-cum-craft room, outfitted as a small kitchen on the second floor.

## Stone Soul

Like the old interiors, the original exterior was not bespoke, though it was unique for its time. Mosaic-patterned local stone had been laid on the inside of the formwork and a concrete shell poured behind it in 2-foot lifts. Peters developed the technique as an antidote to old European buildings, where, he theorized, horizon-



Light from a second-story roof window reaches down to the basement, which contains wine storage, sauna, gym, and bunkroom.

tally laid stones contributed to moisture problems. “He thought if he turned the stone vertical, moisture would be taken care of, and the concrete backing would be impervious to water,” Rudi says. “There was no practical way to recreate his technique. As their masons were

laying the original wall, they didn’t know what it would look like because they were working with the back of the stone and the formwork was on the front. And because the building had been changed over years, there wasn’t much of an original masonry language we could work from.”

## Four Winds

Darien, Connecticut

**ARCHITECT:** Rudi Elert, AIA, principal in charge; Bryce Willis, project architect, Rolfs Elert Office, Port Chester, New York

**BUILDER:** Bill Manderville, Tallman Building Company, Southport, Connecticut

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Savage Designs, Fairfield County, Connecticut

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Janice Parker Landscape Architect, Greenwich, Connecticut

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Edward Stanley Engineers, Guilford, Connecticut

**CIVIL ENGINEER:** S.E. Minor & Co., Greenwich, Connecticut

**PROJECT SIZE:** 12,400 square feet (original house 8,060 square feet)

**SITE SIZE:** 3.4 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Stefan Radtke

### KEY PRODUCTS

**ACOUSTIC:** ROXUL Safe ‘n’ Sound

**CABINETRY:** de Guilio (kitchen), Fairfield County Millwork

**COOKTOP:** Wolf

**CLADDING:** Stone veneer, Boral siding, stucco with Sto finish

**COUNTERTOPS:** Belgian bluestone, Taj Mahal quartzite, Indiana limestone, soapstone, Caesarstone, Nestos, Carrara, Alleanza Dolomiti Extra

**ELEVATOR:** Custom Elevator Manufacturing Co.

**ENGINEERED LUMBER:** Weyerhaeuser Trus Joist

**ENTRY DOORS/HARDWARE:** Creekside Millwork, Baldwin

**FASTENERS:** Simpson Strong-Tie

**FAUCETS:** Waterstone, Hansgrohe, MGS, Waterworks, Kohler

**FOUNDATION:** Poured-in-place reinforced concrete

**GARAGE DOORS/OPENERS:** Hormann – Northwest Door, LiftMaster opener

**HUMIDITY CONTROL:** Condair

**HVAC SYSTEM:** Lochinvar, Trane

**ICEMAKER:** Hoshizaki

**INSULATION:** ROXUL, spray foam

**LIGHTING:** BK, Aurora Light (exterior), Element/Visual Comfort, Q-Tran, WAC

**LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS:** Lutron HomeWorks, Forbes & Lomax

**MILLWORK AND TRIM:** Mahogany

**OTHER EXTERIOR MATERIALS:** Green white oak columns, beams, brackets, lintels; red cedar pergola; bluestone pavers

**OUTDOOR SHOWER:** JEE-O

**OVENS:** Wolf

**PIPING:** PEX

**PORCH HEATER:** Infratech

**RADIANT HEATING:** Uponor

**REFRIGERATORS:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** Vermont Slate

**SAUNA:** Harvia Sauna

**SHOWER ENCLOSURE:** Mr. Shower Door

**SINKS:** Rohl, integral stone, Kohler, Kallista, Fireclay

**SKYLIGHTS:** Glazing Vision (skylights), Renaissance Conservatories

**STRUCTURAL/WEATHERIZATION/BUILDING PERFORMANCE:** Winnick Steel Fabrication

**TOILETS:** Duravit, TOTO

**TUB:** VALLONE, Noken

**UNDERLAYMENT/SHEATHING:** AdvanTech subfloor, ZIP System

**VENTILATION:** Fantech

**WASHER/DRYER:** Electrolux, Miele

**WATER FILTRATION/CONDITIONING:** ZIP System

**WINDOWS:** Norwood (wood), All the Details (steel)






Even so, the builder took pains to match the flat mosaic stone pattern that remains on the entry and part of the rear façade. “It’s random, so you don’t see any horizontal or vertical lines,” Bill says, and stucco was mixed into the new elevations to break up the stone. The slate roof was peeled back, and new slate was woven into the pieces they could salvage.

The architects also retained the original reductive palette of steel windows with oak lintels, using green, rough-sawn white oak. Most of the second-story windows occur in painted cedar dormers and are wood framed. And posts on the entry and back porch have the same mannered, tapered bracket that occurs inside the house.

Out back, a new pool sits on the lower lawn, on axis with the central terrace. There the architects designed a minimalist pool house—essentially an open shade structure held within

simple stone walls. One side of the small building contains a cedar-lined changing room whose closed door reads as a louvered wall. The other side holds an outdoor kitchen; there the louvers are open to admit views through to the trees.

Since the project was completed, the architects have enjoyed watching the family, which now includes two young children, grow into the house. “Their in-laws have moved in across the street and they’ve embedded themselves into the community,” Rudi says. “The old clichés about renovations are true. They would have saved money by scrapping the building, but they saw value in spending the extra construction time to work with the artifact that was there.” Describing every architect’s dream client, he adds: “They had a very sophisticated design sensibility, particularly for their age, and a deep patience for the process.” 



On axis with the rear terrace, a trim pool house includes a cedar-lined changing room in the louvered side façade.





Photo Courtesy of Dan Ryan Studio

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# Reimaginings

Three existing houses receive rejuvenating reinventions.

BY CHERYL WEBER

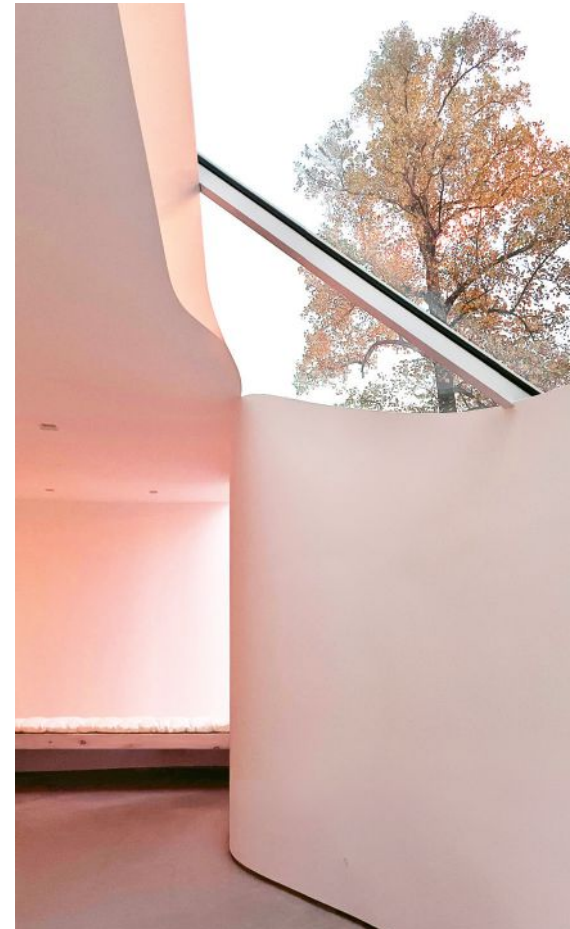
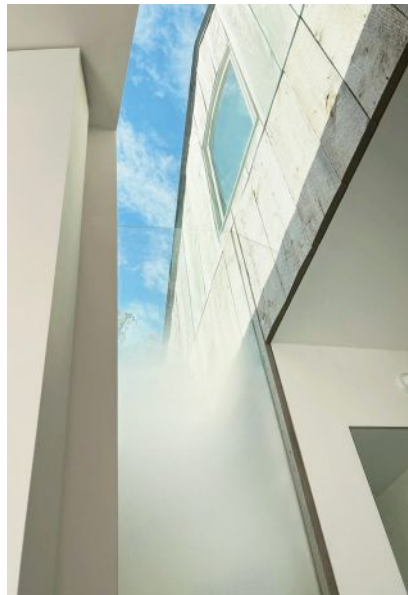




## New + Old House

JULIAN KING ARCHITECT  
OUTSIDE NEW YORK CITY

**For young urban couples**, the decision to have children means envisioning the ideal environment in which to raise them. And often, it's not the city. That was the case for Brooklynites Julian King, AIA, and his wife and business partner Christina Lyons, who a few years ago began searching for a quiet, leafy location within a 40-minute commute of New York City, where they work. The 1926 Dutch Colonial home they settled on was in the worst shape of any they looked at—a rotting teardown with leaky roofs and a rear deck that barely clung to the house. Yet it had its charms. Among them were good bones, a pleasant southern exposure, and a canopy of pine trees that afforded some privacy. While the idea of a full-







Julian's design juxtaposes contemporary ideas about living with nature alongside the archetypal image of a square, gabled barn.



scale renovation and addition was daunting, Julian felt he could truly experiment with this project.

“Emblematic of the state of the house, a vine had grown into the basement through a 1½-inch gap between the concrete block foundation and the wood sill plate, thriving in front of a small window,” he recalls. “It was so absurd, it was the genesis of an idea.”

Beneath the Dutch Colonial trim and false eaves, the house revealed itself as a pure square form containing a living room, dining room, and kitchen on the first floor and two bedrooms and a bath above. Julian (who did most of the work himself) stripped it to its skeleton. On the east side of the house, he also took off the sunroom that sat on top of the basement-level garage. And the house's entire rear south wall was rebuilt 3 feet out to accommodate a new hallway in the cantilevered second floor.

To shore up the foundation, he used epoxy-coated rebar and filled empty CMU foundation walls with concrete, adding embedded sill plate anchor bolts. After a few tweaks to interior and exterior walls, the main

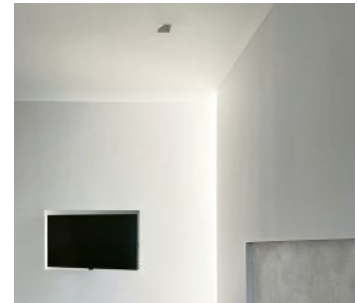




house room locations remained much the same. “I put on a new, simple gable roof with two slopes and focused on the addition,” he says. The 300-square-foot addition—a sculptural, stucco-clad volume—incorporates a playroom/office where the sunroom stood, and a primary suite on top.

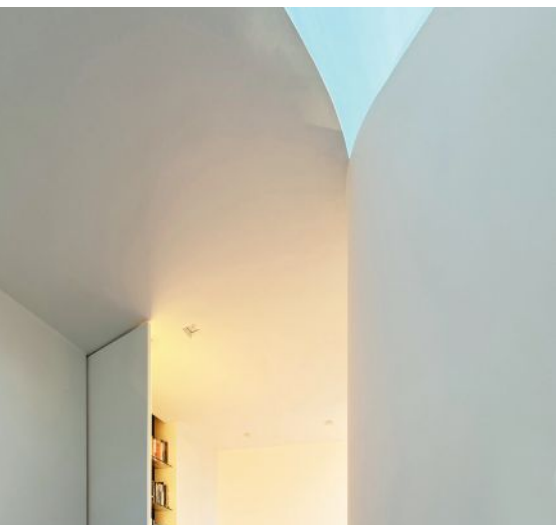
### Between Old and New

Abstracted contextual elements bring creativity to this colonial-style house. In addition to the intrepid vine—more on that later—Julian was inspired by a Cezanne painting, “Mont Sainte-Victorie with Large Pine,” in which tree branches in the foreground



Top: The dining room, with window seat, occupies the old part of the house. Above: The addition’s first-floor playroom doubles as an office with a fold-down desk.





*Top right:* A luminous slot at the end of the hallway beckons you toward the addition's primary suite, which opens dramatically to the trees.

mimic the shape of a distant mountain. “Beautiful pine branches hung over the left side of the tiny garage,” he says. “I could tell I wanted to put something above the garage, where the light coming through the foliage was so nice. It hit me the first day I saw it, and all the studies I did became about making the profile of the tree branches and location of tree trunks generate the shape of the addition.” What followed was an appendage whose bulging outer wall skirts a tree canopy, and a giant skylight that traces the arc of the

branching above it.

The weed he noticed growing out of a foundation gap on his initial visit called to mind the Japanese concept of *engawa*—a space neither inside nor outside. That idea took shape as a glassy slot between the house and addition. At the end of the second-floor hallway, you step into a bright, liminal space where the addition pulls away from the house—an effect created by a glass floor and bar-shaped skylight. Turning left takes you into the primary bedroom under the sweep of a second skylight. “It’s a wonderful promenade of starting to







go upstairs in a typical cellular house,” Julian says. “Then you see this skylit wall at a bit of an angle, and, boom, you are in the trees.”

Another gap occurs outside the primary bath, where full-height glass next to the exposed brick chimney looks out on a planter containing a Japanese maple. At the back of the house, a second planter sits on a ledge that the stucco addition seems to rest on. From his bedroom, the couple’s son can reach out to water the tree and watch it grow.

A mitered, three-sided window on the primary bedroom’s outer front corner enhances the illusion of being in the sky. Made of half-inch tempered glass with silicone joints, it overcomes condensa-

tion issues with a heat-tracing cable fixed to the custom steel frame. The cable warms the frame and glass when outside temperatures dip below 32 degrees, and a radiator under the window seat warms the glass’s interior surface.

“There are a lot of details in the house that look simple but took effort,” Julian says. The biggest puzzle was the bedroom skylight. Flat with a curve on one edge, it measures 15 feet long on its straight side and 7 feet at its widest point and is just high enough to edit out views of neighboring roofs. He used a traditional plumb bob to plot the profile of a tree branch onto huge pieces of paper, then generated a smooth curve on CAD, using the plumb bob again to extrapo-

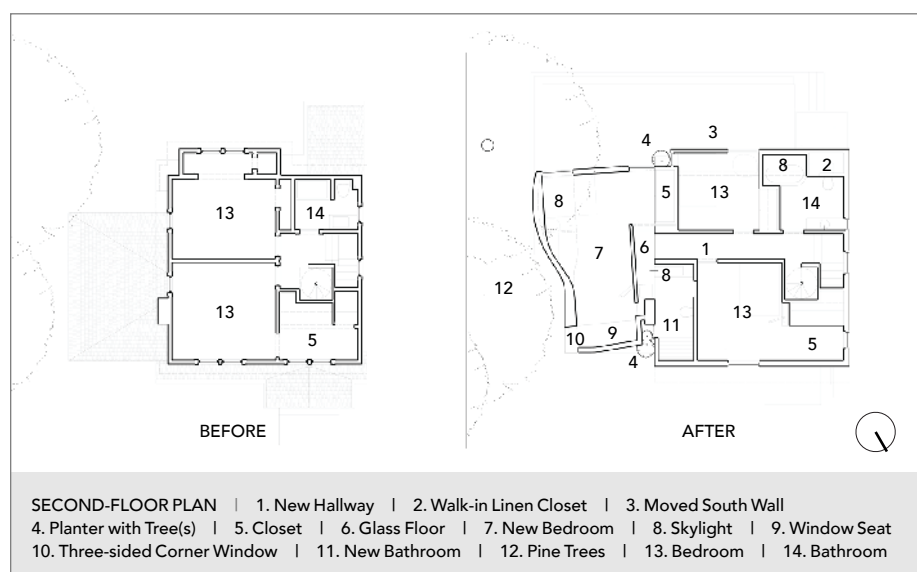
late the arc in a full-scale plan template.

“I printed the drawings full scale and made tweaks,” he says. “It was tricky to get the curve right, and we craned it in, just as it was about to snow.” Executing the wall curve was equally tricky. Julian wet two layers of Sheetrock, bending it repeatedly over many days and then skim coating to refine the shape. And to eliminate distracting reflections of interior framing on the glass’s 45-degree angle, everything behind the plastered wall was painted matte black.

### Light Touch

Inside, the aesthetic is minimalist, with white walls and reclaimed white oak millwork, light pine floors in the





## New + Old House

Outside New York City

**ARCHITECT:** Julian King AIA, Julian King Architect, Brooklyn, New York

**BUILDER:** Julian King, AIA

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Julian King, AIA, and Christina Lyons

**PROJECT SIZE:** 1,800 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.18 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Julian King Architect

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CLADDING:** Reclaimed barnwood, limestone stucco

**DECKING:** Garapa

**DOOR HARDWARE/LOCKS:** ABH, RBA, Kevo, Rejuvenation

**EXTERIOR DOOR:** Siena Woodworks

**FAUCETS:** Fantini, Jaclo (showerhead)

**GLAZING:** Bear Glass, Starphire, Glass Flooring Systems

**HVAC:** Fujitsu mini-splits, Steamview radiators by Runtal, Warmly Yours radiant floor mats

**LIGHTING:** USAI, WAC

**LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEM:** Lutron

**PAINTS/STAINS:** Benjamin Moore

**PASSAGE DOORS:** Studco

**ROOFING:** IB Roof Systems (PVC flat-roof addition), asphalt shingle (old house)

**SINKS:** Corian, Rohl

**SKYLIGHTS:** Solar Innovations, Pella

**SOLID SURFACING:** Corian

**SPECIAL SURFACING:** Tadelakt

**TOILETS:** Caroma

**TUBS:** Hydro Systems with custom Corian surround

**WEATHERPROOFING:** Tyvek, CDX ply

**WINDOWS:** Marvin, Andersen

**WOOD FLOORS:** Vermont Plank Flooring





original house, and concrete floors in the addition. In the kitchen, which is still in progress, a 4-foot-wide pocket door opens to the dining room, where a large frameless window and built-in seat look out to the south-facing backyard. The upper-floor cantilever creates a sheltered entry onto the Garapa deck that spans the back of the house. Its detailing reinforces the relationship between old and new: constructed of interwoven 18- and 16-foot boards, the deck joints align along an overlap between the house and addition. Julian left the deck in its natural state to complement the reclaimed barnwood siding, which slips inside on both floors to mark the transition between old and new.

Opposite the dining area, an airy room in the addition can double as a playroom or a den with built-in bookshelves and a fold-down desk. Full-height sliding doors open to the deck, and a recessed track in the deep

**“The light is refracted and really nice; glowing light fills the interiors without a need for blinds or shades. We rarely turn the lights on.”**

—Julian King, AIA

soffit holds a sliding screen, creating an indoor-outdoor experience.

An existing steel-plate spiral staircase ascends to the bedroom level, outfitted with a similar modernist economy. The primary bath, for example, contains a sleek trough sink and a custom cedar-and-glass door that opens to the tree planter. Its bottom track is hidden in the side of the house, enabling the door to disappear when open. The other bath holds a tub set into a curving Corian surround.

Adding to the clean and uncluttered effect, the home’s side windows were installed with textured glass that blurs views of the neighboring properties. “The light is refracted and really nice; glowing light fills the interiors without a need for blinds or shades,” Julian says. “We rarely turn the lights on.”

While the glassy slot is most fully experienced internally, the juxtaposition of old and new is immediately visible on the outside. If the addition’s white, flat surface and glass insertions embody contemporary notions about living with nature, the original house’s reclaimed board siding was a way to acknowledge and update the past.

It is part of a wall system that sealed the drafty old house with plywood sheathing covered in a waterproof membrane and rigid insulation. Over those layers, Julian used vertical and horizontal wood nailers to create a ventilated gap behind the barnwood siding—a nod to the region’s agricultural history. While the contemporary rainscreen assembly allowed for a flush installation that emphasizes the dwelling’s simple form, the full-height boards recall traditional barn detailing.

Likewise, the 12-foot-tall, pivoting front door is clad in the same material and set flush in the exterior wall. Julian built the garage door out of wood, to which he fastened sheets of hot-rolled steel. By contrast, the application of the addition’s stucco, which dried quickly and involved scaffolding, was one of the few things the architect couldn’t do on his own.

For Julian, this project gave him not just creative license but the satisfaction of building it himself. “I don’t know if I’ll ever leave this house,” he says. “The skylight is fun at night. Sometime our son lies back with us and we watch planes from Newark Airport, and their trails. Sometimes a hawk flies over. It’s my little manifesto on how a building can be part of its context.” **RD**





## Loyal Captain

HELIOTROPE ARCHITECTS  
SEATTLE

**Idyllically situated** beside Puget Sound, Seattle's North Beach neighborhood has a strong Scandinavian heritage. A century ago, many Norwegians, Swedes, and Finns immigrated to work in the fishing and timber industries and built homes here. Ship captain Ole E. Nilsen was one of them. Now a historic landmark, the house he built in 1933 was reportedly a replica of his boyhood home in





Bergen, Norway. Fortunately, the hallmarks of its meticulous craftsmanship are well-preserved, including the old-growth western red cedar shingles, Douglas fir walls and ceilings, and hand-painted rosemaling—a traditional Norwegian style of folk art.

Heliotrope principal Mike Mora, AIA, who lives close by, had been driving past the house for years, but it wasn't until he traveled to Rome that he ran into the current owners. "I met these guys for the first time at a concert, and I said, 'So, wait, you guys live in my neighborhood? Where?'" They described the house, one of my favorites in the city," Mike says. "I'd had a chance to tour it with the previous owners. Eight months later, the clients sent us an email."

They wanted a one-story kitchen addition to remedy the small galley kitchen that many of these houses have—too confining for this family who likes to hang out where they cook. There was plenty of room to expand: a big yard on the south side of the house held an old tennis court.







The old kitchen is now a butler's pantry and office niche wrapped in rustic white oak.

“That’s the side the original kitchen was on,” Mike says. “It made sense to go out to this new building and then to convert the original kitchen into a nicely finished adjacent pantry with a sink, dishwasher, and wine storage.” Opposite the galley kitchen is the original dining room. Thus, the sequencing of spaces seemed clear. With the pantry and dining room close by, one moves through a glass-walled passageway that connects the house to the addition.

### A Separate Piece

Any alterations, of course, had to be approved by the landmark board. “Interestingly, they prefer it if you don’t make the new addition something that seeks to mimic the original character of the house,” Mike says. “They want to make sure the historic building is identifiable and any addition to it doesn’t blend in.” That was fine with the team, who weren’t interested in mirroring the original house, either. However, they took inspiration from the home’s heavy timbers and a covered porch with supportive posts off the dining room. In the new flat-roofed,





post-and-beam scheme, four posts and beams extend out to align with the dining room's posts, creating an outdoor terrace with a wood-fired barbecue and establishing a walkway between the two buildings. The posts sit on concrete plinths cut at an angle to shed water. The result is a contemporary structure that harmonizes with the house.

"We wanted to make sure we were stitching this thing together in a

way that felt right," Mike says. "You leave the existing house and cross this hallway with the glass walls to enter the new building. It's an appropriate, healthy connection, but there is a clear threshold separating them." The dark brick wall on the addition's street side underscores that distinction. Made from a random composition of smooth and textured bricks, the wall forms a heavy mass that the kitchen pavilion nestles against, away from the street. The brick reappears behind the outdoor grill and comes inside at the breakfast nook.

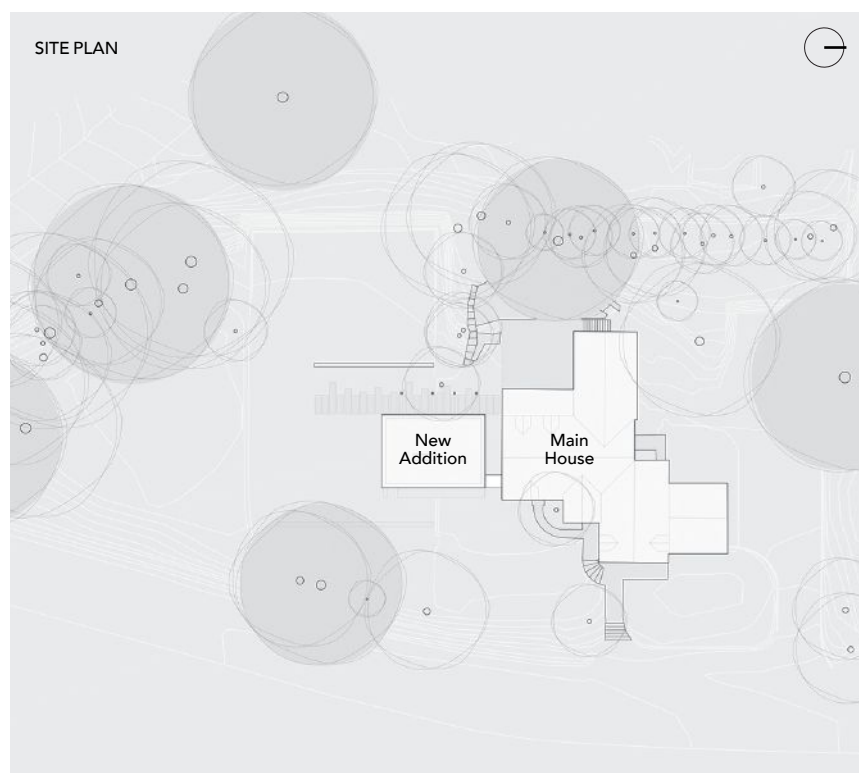
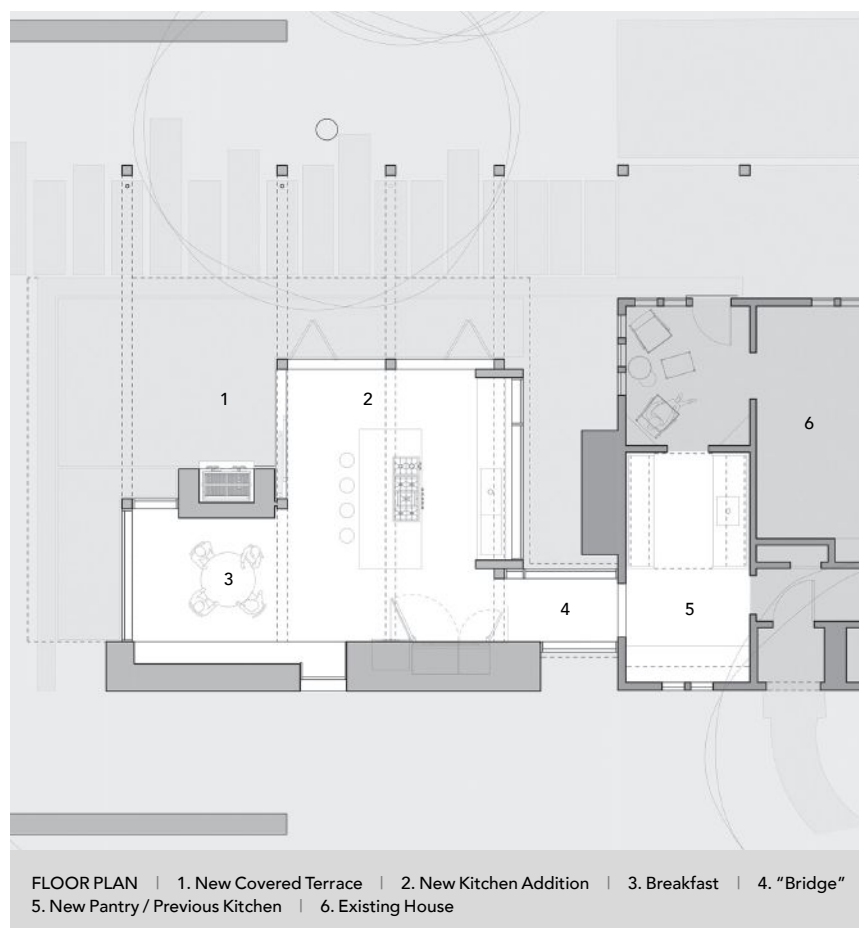
One of the biggest construction challenges, says Dovetail General Contractors' Scott Edwards, was mobilizing to minimize the impact on the vegetation. "There was a lot of materiality—brick, timbers, glass," he says. "In juxtaposition to the main house with its big trims, the addition is more modern and minimalist. It was fun to see how they fit together and how they differ from each other. The glass gasket that connects the new kitchen to the old house was a nice way to make that transition."

The building's heavy posts and beams are premium-grade Douglas fir, with checks and cracks that sup-



A glass connector and window above the backsplash distinguish original and new.





## Loyal Captain

Seattle

**ARCHITECT:** Mike Mora, AIA, Heliotrope Architects, Seattle

**BUILDER:** Dovetail General Contractors, Seattle

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Heliotrope Architects

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** Swenson Say Fagét, Seattle

**GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER:** PanGEO, Seattle

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** David Berleth, Ironwood Tree, Seattle

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** LightPlan, Seattle

**PROJECT SIZE:** 500 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 0.75 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** \$2,000 per square foot

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Kevin Scott

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CABINETRY:** Rustic white oak

**CLADDING:** Western red clear cedar, brick

**COOKING VENT HOOD:** Gaggenau

**COOKTOP:** Gaggenau

**COUNTERTOPS:** Taj Mahal quartzite

**DISHWASHER:** Fisher & Paykel

**ELECTRICAL OUTLETS:** Bocci

**ENTRY DOORS:** Quantum Windows & Doors

**FASCIA:** Richlite

**FAUCETS:** Vola by Arne Jacobsen

**FINISH MATERIALS:** cedar and oak paneling

**FLOORING:** Ground and polished concrete slab-on-grade

**GRILL:** Grillworks (wood-fired, outdoor)

**HEAVY TIMBERS:** Cascade Fine Joinery

**INSULATION/HOUSEWRAP/MOISTURE BARRIERS:** VaproShield

**LIGHTING:** BK Lighting, Lucifer, Lindsey Adelman Knotty Bubbles (at breakfast table)

**MILLWORK:** Western red clear cedar

**OVENS:** Miele

**PAINTS/STAINS:** Sansin Precision Coat (heavy timbers), Daly's semi-transparent wood stain (interiors)

**REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER:** Gaggenau

**UNDERCOUNTER REFRIGERATOR:** Fisher & Paykel

**WINDOWS AND WINDOW WALL SYSTEM:** Quantum Windows & Doors

**WINE REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero





ply character. The ceiling is made of 2 ½-inch-thick tongue-in-groove structural car decking with a ¼-inch clear cedar veneer on the underside. “There are no joists or rafters above that; it’s the structural roof, then a membrane and green roof,” Mike says. “The kids’ bedrooms look down on it, and the daughter climbs out onto it from her window. With spring and summer growth, the vegetation is visible from the ground.”

### Craft Tradition

Inside, the addition’s layout is straightforward, with a cooktop in the white oak island, wall ovens, and a bump-out for a table in front of a full-height window. The sink wall incorporates another window looking back to the house, facing the old brick

chimney across a 7-foot gap. In the dining nook, an undercounter beverage fridge is hidden in dark-stained cabinetry, a reference to the black masonry outer wall on this side of the addition, where a window pokes through. In keeping with the modernist aesthetic, round, trimless electrical outlets almost disappear into the wall, and finger pulls CNC-routed into the top edges of the wood cabinetry eliminate the visual clutter of handles. Quartzite countertops with a leather-like finish match those in the new pantry. And the walls are fully paneled, like the rest of the house.

While the addition has radiant heated, polished concrete floors, the house’s floors are oak. These were reinstated in the original kitchen after it was gutted to create the jewel-box-







like butler's pantry. The pantry cabinets have a rustic white oak veneer, an echo of the original knotty pine. "The case-work wraps the walls and ceiling as one piece," says Scott. "It was like inserting a ship into a bottle because the two door openings to the pantry were really small. We built the entire thing, including the ceiling, in our shop, then took it apart and installed it in the new pantry, putting the ceiling in first and the cabinet walls below." They also built a desk into a niche near the passageway to the addition. The paneling there is new but a match to the old.

The clients' commitment to craft informed design decisions large and small. An early indication of this mindset was their collection of art and furniture, including a large dining table and chairs by Roy McMakin, a Saarinen tulip table, and Hiroshima armchairs. Although there was a budget, the clients asked the architects for their best ideas and were open to its evolution. "Their ambition was high in terms of quality of materials and systems," Mike says. "As we walked through decisions like plumbing fixtures, they had a strong sensibility about what they liked and

were just as often driven by form as by function." For example, the Vola plumbing fixture, based on an Arne Jacobsen design, is "not the most practical kitchen faucet, but for them the beauty of the object might just as well trump function."

The clients' appreciation for thoughtful design and craft is very much in keeping with the spirit of the original house, and the addition honors that tradition. Although the firm typically takes on larger-scale residential and commercial projects, this one was worth the effort. "It's small but something we're proud of," Mike says. 



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Photo: Bernard André



## Tudor Revival

TRG ARCHITECTURE + INTERIORS  
BURLINGAME, CALIFORNIA

**The owners of this** 1924 Tudor Revival house knew they were taking a chance when they bought it several years ago, intending to remove it and build new. The well-loved neighborhood, walkable to downtown Burlingame, was marked as a potential historic district, which meant that any plans for the house had to go through a historic review process. And sure enough, when the report came back, they were prohibited from tearing it down.

Enter TRG Architecture + Interiors, whom the clients—a couple with three school-age children—hired to



see how the house could accommodate their ambitious program. It soon became apparent that the addition they needed would literally require a heavy lift—moving the 3,200-square-foot house from the middle to the south-east side of their half-acre lot. “The family hosts lots of fundraisers and community gatherings,” says principal Randy Grange, AIA. “They wanted a place to have big, catered events, with a lot of indoor-outdoor flow and different places to do activities.”

After the house was settled onto its new foundation, they built a modern wing to the northwest, resulting in an L-shaped plan facing south, with a transparent entry hall and bridge linking the old and new. The 4,800-square-foot addition juts into the deep back-yard; it contains a new family room, kitchen, and dining room, with a primary suite on the second level and a theater, game room, and gym in the basement. The updated Tudor portion houses the formal spaces, including a living room, two offices, a guest room, and a mudroom off the existing driveway. Upstairs, two en-suite bedrooms, a laundry, and a playroom/third bedroom circle around the original two-story space overlooking the library.





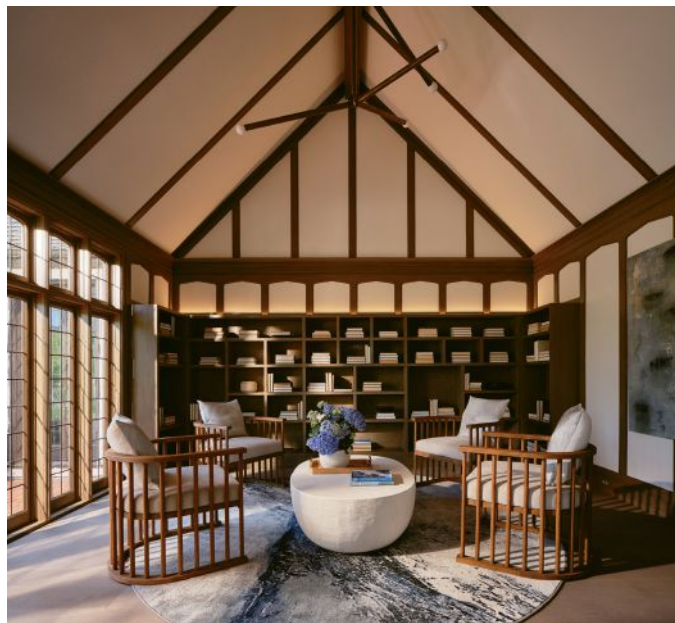


“It was a case of making lemonade out of lemons,” Randy says. “It was a difficult task to insert a modern building into that neighborhood, but because we were contrasting it with the historic resource, we were able to get away with it, and that drove it into a fun zone.”

### Interlocked

In the process of gutting nearly the entire house, the team removed one-story dining room and sitting room additions at the rear. The library was preserved, but the breakfast room and part of

the kitchen were turned into an office at the back of the house, and the back stairway became a mudroom. Finally, removing a wall in the former entry hall resulted in a larger living room. The second-floor rooms remained largely the same, except for the addition of a girls’ bath where the stair had been, and an en-suite bath in the son’s room that was carved from attic space at the front of the house. The girls’ shared bedroom received a flat-roofed dormer, creating a light-filled lounge and balcony facing the backyard.



Although all finishes except in the library are new, the original details were carefully dismantled, documented, and refurbished or replicated. “The clients wanted to bring the old part back to life,” says interiors principal Leslie Lamarre. “We replicated the original window trim and baseboards and recreated the living room’s paneling and coffered ceiling.” The wood front door was restored, too; it opens to a new brick patio and planter outside the living room—a copy of the original entry terrace.



At the front of the house, the addition’s dining room and the original house’s living room face each other across the entry terrace.





Handblown glass was inserted into new windows on the office and library, evoking the wavy pattern of the old ones. “The original house was neglected quite a bit,” says project manager Samaneh Nili. “We replaced the roof and stucco and replicated the fascia details and half-timbering, keeping the character of the defining details.” That included the chimney, which was taken down to move the house. While the previous stucco had been painted gray, the new stucco is white, as shown in historic photographs.

With the addition’s short side facing the street, those restorative moves more than satisfied the historic commission. “The old and new are interlocked, the yin and the yang,” Leslie says. “Right behind the girls’ bedroom, everything comes together and you see how the old and new are attached.”

“When you see the house from the front, the old part is the dominant half,” adds Randy. “In the back it almost becomes a little cartoon off to the side.”



Photo: Bernard André







Retractable louvers adjust for privacy and shading on the southwest-facing bridge linking old and new on the second floor. The primary suite steps out to a balcony tucked into the addition's rooftop garden.

## Light Box

Indeed, a prominent feature of the rear elevation is the two-story, Cor-Ten-clad stair tower that connects the two parts of the house. A Chicago-based metal artist built the staircase. “The way it’s built, it’s holding its own weight,” says Samaneh. “Its transparency brings a lot of light to the basement.” On the upper

level, a glassy bridge separates the primary suite from the kids’ bedrooms.

“To connect the two, we ended up with a corridor facing southwest and wanted it to be airy and glassy but knew it would bake in the sun,” says Samaneh. “We found an exterior louver system that pockets into a narrow band at the roof.” Installed on the primary suite and the

bridge, its adjustable blades can be lowered or raised, disappearing into the roof.

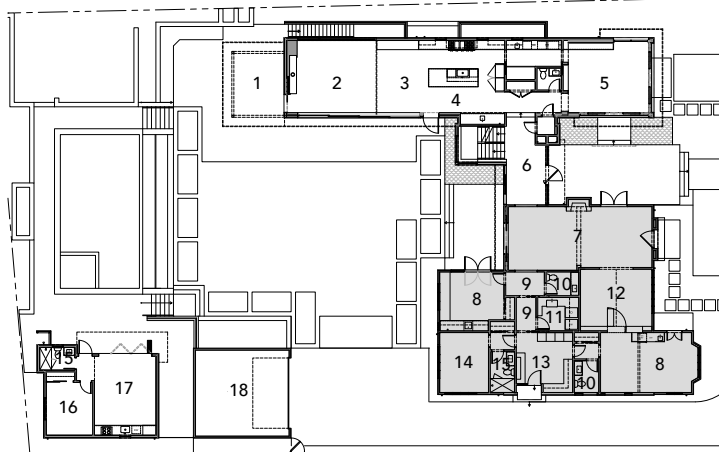
Long and narrow for light penetration and an indoor-outdoor feel, the addition’s rooms were finished in wide-plank oak flooring. In the kitchen, light-colored quartzite countertops complement the white oak cabinetry and ebonized uppers, while a slab of



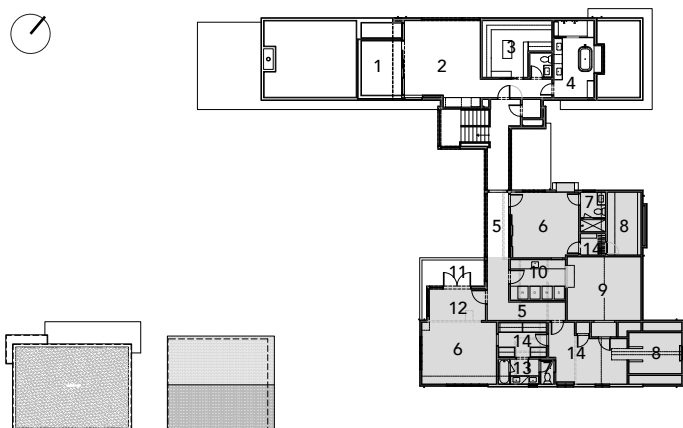
In the Tudor portion of the house, a flat-roofed dormer in the girls’ bedroom added space for a lounge and walk-out balcony.







**FIRST-FLOOR PLAN** | 1. Covered Porch | 2. Family Room | 3. Breakfast Dining  
4. Kitchen | 5. Dining Room | 6. Entry Link | 7. Living Room | 8. Office  
9. Hall | 10. Powder | 11. Mud Laundry | 12. Library | 13. Mudroom  
14. Guest Bedroom | 15. Bath | 16. Bedroom | 17. Great Room | 18. Garage



**SECOND-FLOOR PLAN** | 1. Terrace | 2. Primary Bedroom | 3. Primary Closet  
4. Primary Bath | 5. Hall | 6. Bedroom | 7. W.C. | 8. Attic  
9. Open to Library Below | 10. Laundry | 11. Balcony | 12. Girls' Lounge  
13. Bath | 14. Closet



## Tudor Revival

Burlingame, California

**ARCHITECT:** Randy Grange, AIA, principal in charge; Yossi Zinger, AIA, project architect; Samaneh Nili, project manager, TRG Architecture + Interior Design, San Mateo, California

**BUILDER:** JP Lindstrom, Burlingame, California

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Leslie Lamarre, interiors principal in charge; Erika Shjeflo, project manager, TRG Architecture + Interiors

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Mike Callan, San Mateo, California

**STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:** BKG Structural Engineers, San Carlos, California

**CIVIL ENGINEER:** KPROX Civil Engineering, Palo Alto, California

**MECHANICAL ENGINEER:** Blue Forest Engineering, Oakland, California

**ELECTRICAL ENGINEER:** Atium Engineering, San Ramon, California

**PROJECT SIZE:** 8,959 square feet (including garage and pool house)

**SITE SIZE:** 0.5 acre

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** R. Brad Knipstein Photography (except where noted)

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CABINETS:** Henrybuilt

**CABINETS HARDWARE:** Henrybuilt, Armac Martin, Turnstyle Designs

**CLADDING:** Accoya, Cor-Ten steel

**COOKING VENT HOOD:** Modern Air

**COOKTOP:** La Cornue

**COUNTERTOPS:** Bianco quartzite, Caprice White honed marble, quartzite Nera

**DISHWASHER:** Asko, Miele, Fisher & Paykel

**ENTRY DOORS AND HARDWARE:** Pacific Sash &

Design, Sun Valley Bronze hardware

**EXTERIOR VENETIAN BLINDS:** Warema

**FIREPLACE:** Da Vinci Fireplaces

**FLOORING:** Carlisle wide plank, Oak-Urban Collection, Swaying Hammock

**FAUCETS:** VOLA, Watermark, Kohler, Dornbracht, Galley, Rohl, Zip Water

**GREEN ROOF:** LiveRoof Green Roof System

**ICEMAKER:** U-Line

**LIGHTING:** Element

**LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS:** Crestron Electronics

**MILLWORK:** Fry Reglet

**OUTDOOR GRILL, PIZZA OVEN, REFRIGERATOR, SMOKER CABINET:** Kalamazoo

**OUTDOOR HEATERS:** Infratech

**OVENs:** Wolf

**PAINTS/STAINS:** Benjamin Moore (black beauty) Classic Gray (exterior)

**REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero

**ROOFING:** Timberline Roofing Shingles

**SKYLIGHTS:** VELUX Sun Tunnel

**STAIR:** David Green—Iron & Wire

**TILE:** Sonoma Tilemakers, Artistic Tile, Red Rock Tileworks, Fireclay, Ann Sacks

**TOILETS:** TOTO, Kohler

**TOWEL HEATERS:** Dacor

**VANITIES:** Henrybuilt

**WALLPAPER:** Calico, Abnormals Anonymous, Designers Guild

**WASHER/DRYER:** Electrolux

**WINDOW SHADING SYSTEMS:** Crestron Electronics

**WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS:** Fleetwood Windows & Doors

**WINDOWS:** Fleetwood Windows & Doors, Kolbe Windows





Photo: Bernard André

live-edge elm extends the island seating. A cove-lit “cube” floating between the kitchen and dining room contains a coat closet and powder room facing the entryway, a storage closet and pantry serving the bar on the opposite wall, and a wine closet on the dining room side.


Upstairs, the primary bedroom balcony is enfolded in a green roof atop the family room. In the adjoining bath, serene white oak casework is mixed with marble countertops and accent shower tile, while watery-patterned porcelain floor tile and a shapely tub lend organic grace. The designers had some fun with wallpaper. Silver wallpaper with geometric fan shapes adds a glam touch to the noir finishes in the cube’s pow-

der room. Over in the old part of the house, gilded beetles decorate the walls of another powder room, and stylized bluebirds flit among swirly clouds on the girls’ bedroom ceiling.

Outside, the original detached garage was preserved, but the pool house behind it was rebuilt. “Because it was behind the pitched-roof garage, we could make it modern without affecting the relationship between the two structures,” Randy says.

As you move through the house on both floors, the dichotomy between the classical and new spaces is quite clear. The project not only satisfied a discerning historic commission but presented a puzzle that pleased the



architects. “This project was a great excuse to do a modern building in this old neighborhood, and there was good justification for it,” says project architect Yossi Zinger, AIA. “We took it as an opportunity.” 





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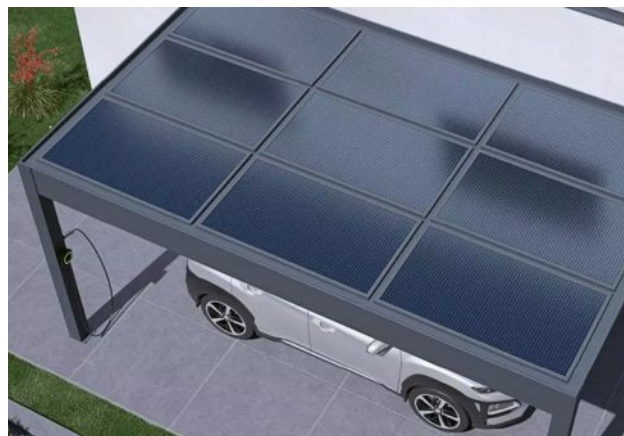
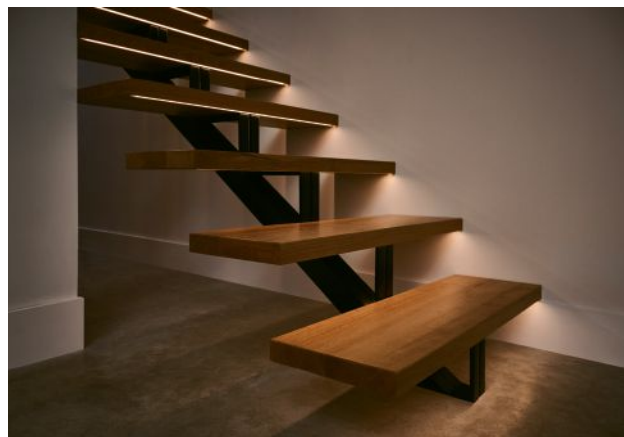


Photo: Courtesy of Azenco Outdoor

2



3



4

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## 2. COVER STORY

For architects seeking a packaged solution for modern carports, Azenco Outdoor has devised the R-CAR structure. Fabricated of powder-coated aluminum in custom dimensions and various finishes, it accommodates insulated roof panels or the clients' solar panels. [Azenco-Outdoor.com](http://Azenco-Outdoor.com)

## 3. NEW STONE TURNS

Sintered stone maker Neolith expands its repertoire of kitchen and bath surfacing with four new options: Neolith Taj Mahal, Crème, Azure, and Mamba. Shown here in Mamba, all surfaces are 12mm thick with a silk finish. An additional model, Neolith Lux, is a pure, polished white. [Neolith.com](http://Neolith.com)

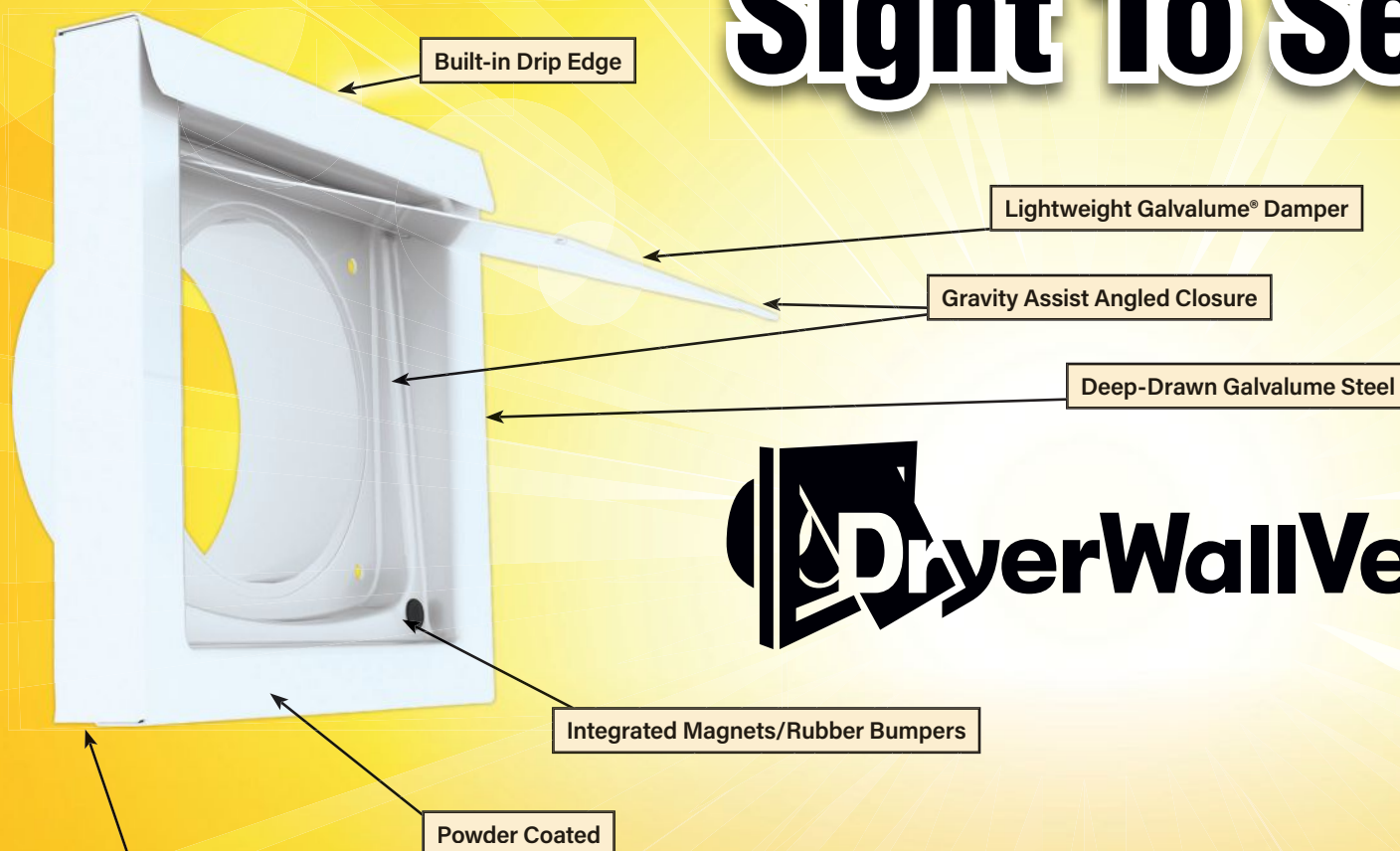
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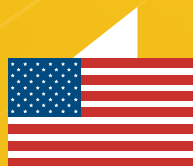
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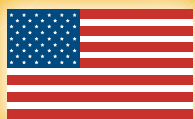
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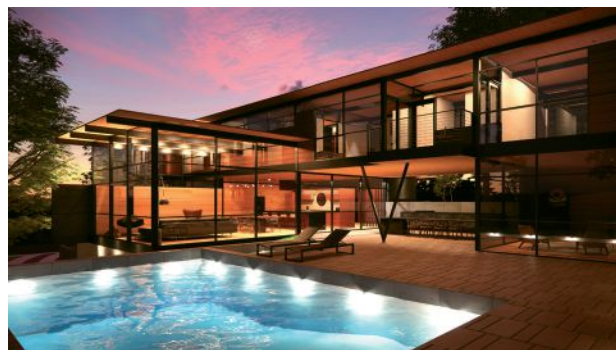


## Urban Forest

GREENLANDER  
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ROBERT M. CAIN, ARCHITECT

If anyone knows how to rise above the restrictions of a difficult urban site, it's architect Robert Cain, FAIA. His new project, Greenland, unites two hitherto "unbuildable" corner lots into a prime homesite that will immerse occupants in its unique creekside landscape.

What makes it unique is its bounty of old growth trees, long ago clear cut in most areas of urban Atlanta. "It's like a nature preserve," says Bob, "with 40-inch white oaks and poplars." However, because of the required stream buffer, there was "very little buildable area" to each lot. The answer was to combine the lots and take advantage of their corner location to capture more generous setback allowances, while keeping outside the 75-foot buffer. "That allowed us to dodge many of the trees," says Bob.



Trees that must be removed will be repurposed as cabinetry, finishes, and furniture for the 5,000-square-foot house. The worldly clients requested a "Scandinavian, Japandi" feel to the house, with an emphasis on natural materials on the interiors, no-maintenance exteriors, and loads of natural light. "Every little directional change of the house will open up to fabulous views," says Bob. "You'll get a sense of the circadian rhythm as you move through the day."—*S. Claire Conroy*

Architect: Robert M. Cain, FAIA, Robert M. Cain, Architect, Atlanta; structural engineer: Tony Patruta PE, Atlanta; site size: 0.68 acre; project size: 5,000 square feet; construction cost: \$600 a square foot; renderings: Matt Reddick.



# HOME EXTERIOR SOLUTIONS

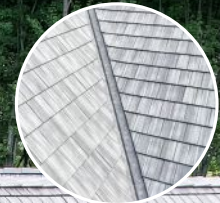
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