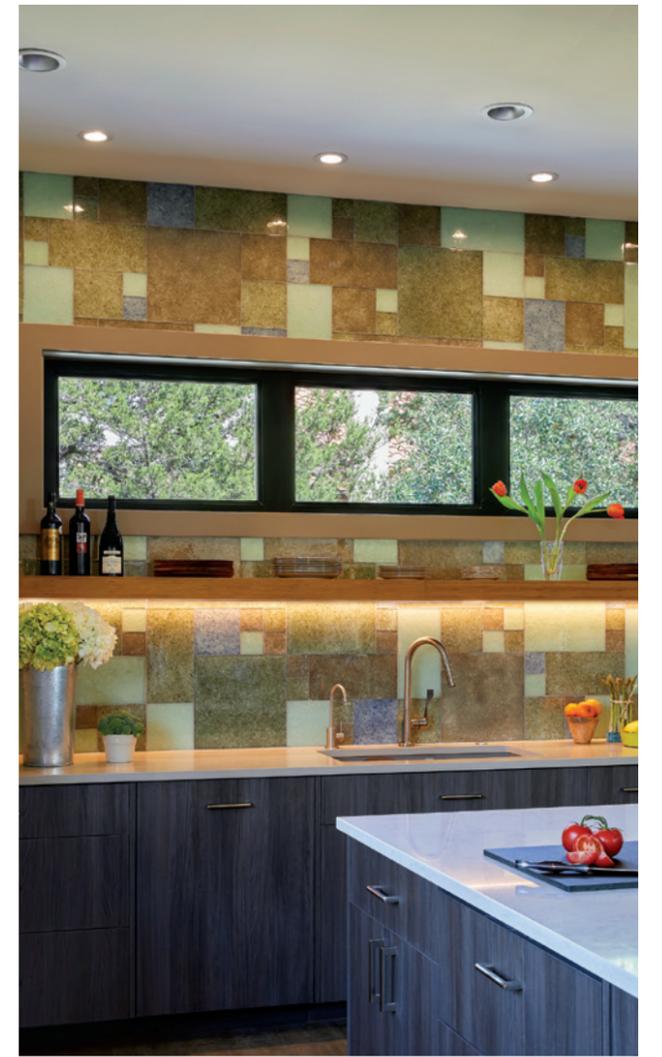




Living LARGE

By Angela Rabke
Photography by Dror Baldinger

Many of the newly constructed homes in Boerne's scenic Cordillera Ranch are designed around a very generous footprint. This house, a 3,600-square-foot gem located in the subdivision and designed by San Antonio architect Craig McMahon, proves that you can achieve the same sense of space and privacy with a more compact site and design.





McMahon's East Coast clients were keen to establish a centrally located retreat for family gatherings with their West Coast kids. One of the owners grew up in the Texas Hill Country and was looking to build a modern home that reflected Texas' architectural tradition with honesty. Inspired by memories of Texas ranches and Hill Country landscapes, Cordillera Ranch was an ideal location to build their gathering spot. The family appreciated the development's proximity to the Guadalupe River, as well as the focus on outdoor activities like fly fishing, equestrian activities, tennis, swimming and golf. They settled on a 1.1-acre site with lots of trees and a view of the famed Jack Nicklaus golf course. The long and narrow lot, bookended by two larger homes, had a gentle 25-foot slope and provided some interesting design challenges that ultimately led to a beautiful and light-filled courtyard solution.

It was important for the couple that the primary living space be a single story without stairs. Keeping that in mind, McMahon divided the four-bedroom, four-and-a-half bath home into two living units, and utilized a plateau area midway up the hill to create the courtyard entry area for the two-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath main home. Surrounded by trees, and set back from the street, the placement provides a privacy screen for the courtyard entrance, where the main entry opens into a completely transparent living space rather than a traditional front door. Complete with plenty of outdoor seating, a striking fire pit and steel water feature, the intimate and uniquely scaled main living courtyard became the primary focus of the entry sequence, with owners and visitors driving up to find the private sanctuary in the center.

The home feels quite contemporary, yet is unquestionably influenced by historical Texas architecture. Limestone, quarried in nearby Sisterdale, carries through to interior walls from the exterior, and is deeply reminiscent of the historic German homes sprinkled throughout the Texas Hill Country. Douglas Fir ceilings, doors and trim add warmth to every detail and are stained to complement the refined Texas color palette. The roof feels as if it is floating over the living room, using key clamp support instead of traditional columns, which would have disrupted the nature-filled views. Each room in the house has its own private access to the courtyard patio area. "While the house is 3,600 feet, it lives so much bigger," says McMahon. "Without the glass, you might as well be outside."

The main design feature of the home is the uniquely placed living room. The all-glass single-wide room extends the indoor/outdoor courtyard and continues directly to the cantilevered deck, offering dramatic raised views to the golf course. The weathered steel guardrail is reminiscent of Texas barn design and allows for privacy from the interior spaces while



maintaining the panoramic views. Despite its transparency, the house offers the family plenty of privacy, and gives the owners and their guests the option to retreat to their own personal spaces. A stand-alone two-bedroom, two-bath guest-house includes a small kitchenette and living space, and remains connected to the main house through landscaping and outdoor living spaces. The design team assisted during the original clearing of the lot, which was full of cedar and hidden oak trees, to insure that the mature oaks trees were preserved and incorporated into the final plans.

The galley kitchen is organized entirely to maximize the sweeping views. A Mondrian-esque arrangement of recycled glass tiles sourced at Materials Marketing is installed on the wall. McMahon notes that kitchens don't usually have such large, uninterrupted wall space. "The use of an induction stove-top eliminated the need for a hood vent, allowing us to create this large art wall, and again enabling clear views to the outdoors. Without a gas stove, we were able to have more counter space and room for food preparation." A large island anchors the space, and includes the induction cook top and a second stainless steel trough sink.

A media and library room separates the living room from the master bedroom and allows the owners to watch TV or en-

joy a fire before turning in. Like the living spaces, the master suite offers elevated views of the golf course through its 8' x 8' large main window. All of the windows and doors in the home are highly insulated aluminum La Cantina products, which helps the structure achieve an optimal thermal performance despite Texas' extreme heat.

An especially unique feature of the home is a centrally located "laundry suite" that has a direct view to the courtyard, and is prominently placed rather than being tucked away in a back room. This space allows for the families to "meet in the middle" of the home. Just connected is the main home's second bedroom/home office — complete with barn doors to allow for a very open and interconnected space when needed.

The house is a prime example of what can be achieved with smart space planning. By listening to the client's goals and working with the site and landscape, the team developed a unique and inviting design that gives every inhabitant plenty of privacy and lots of space, as well as every opportunity to come together and enjoy the stunning natural setting of the surrounding Texas Hill Country. ♦

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