



INTELLIGENT DESIGN

By Julie Catalano Photography by Rubigirl Photography

When an Austin couple wanted a place to raise their family in a natural setting just outside the city, they turned to the experts for a dream design and healthy living from the ground up.

“**T**he homeowners’ goal was to build a custom home as intelligently as they could, with low energy consumption and alternative water sources,” says Peter L. Pfeiffer, FAIA, founding principal of Barley|Pfeiffer Architecture in Austin. The LEED certified firm specializes in high performance architecture with an emphasis on smart, thoughtful design. “First and foremost, the clients wanted a home that worked for their family.”





Visiting the site to determine orientation, the team was delighted to discover great views and natural cooling breezes for a one-story structure “on a long axis running east to west, meaning that the majority of windows would face north and south, which is ideal in this climate,” says Pfeiffer.

The builder was Oliver Custom Homes of Austin, who constructed the four-bedroom, four-bath, 4,167-square-foot hill-side home using low maintenance exterior materials such as stucco, limestone and metal siding. The landscape features native, drought-tolerant plants and a manmade creek bed to manage water flow during Texas gully washers.

The standing seam roof is actually a double roof, says Pfeiffer, that works to significantly diminish heat penetration. “There’s the roof that you see, then there’s an air space, then a sub roof. It’s like we parked the whole house underneath a carport.” The detached garage ensures that gasoline and other harmful fumes are far enough away from the living space to not affect indoor air quality.

Inside, a spacious open floor plan is beautifully bathed in natural light, but without the attendant heat thanks to awnings. “When people think of energy efficiency they think of insulation in the walls,” says Pfeiffer, “but insulation is fairly insignifi-

cant if you don’t shade your windows from the hot sun.”

“Using light colors on the interior surfaces to reflect natural light also saves on energy,” says Sharon Radovich, owner of Panache Interiors of Austin. Her judicious use of bright accents brings an energy all its own to the house as she worked closely with the homeowners in bringing together all of the design elements they wanted.

For the open floor plan of living area, kitchen, breakfast area, dining room and screened porch, Radovich specified a bright white for the walls and contrasted it with tones of gray. “The range of gray adds depth and keeps the modern



space from feeling cold.” Both soft and rich shades in varying textures are echoed in the seating area sofa, the fireplace surround in marble and the kitchen cabinetry and counters. She captured the family’s energy with playful punches of blue, red, yellow and orange. Sherwin-Williams® Extra White interior wall paint perfectly complements the natural hickory floor from Mike’s Hardwood Floors, Inc., in Austin. A bright blue front door in Sherwin-Williams® Danube is a striking focal point.

The homeowners enjoy cooking, and the compact, efficient kitchen — framed by Massaranduba, an exquisite Brazilian redwood — features Wolf® and Sub-Zero® appliances, with under counter freezers, two ovens, a gas range and induction cooktop. Bar stools in glossy white from Five Elements Furniture nestle against the huge island. Nearby, the whimsical Link hanging fixture in stacked wood veneer Möbius strips illuminates the breakfast area.

“The homeowners love the ocean and snorkeling together



as a family,” says Radovich. “We wanted to capture that euphoric feeling and collaborated with Austin faux artists from Zita Art. In the dining room, they mirrored fan coral on the opposing walls, reversing textures to add interest.” Overhead is a Larmes 24-Light Pendant, “one of the most popular



light fixtures of the last decade,” says Radovich, “The beautiful teardrop pendants can be hung at different heights in varying designs so you create your own unique piece.”

The water theme is also evident on a bathroom wall inspired by the monumental work “Stacked Waters” by Teresita Fernández at Austin’s Blanton Museum of Art. “The couple was captivated by the watery effect of the art installation,” says Radovich, “so I sourced shimmery glass tiles in the same colors and scaled a pattern for the tile installer to implement.”

The house is decidedly family- and guest-friendly, with a two-level game room connected by ladder to a loft; a screened-in porch with limestone floor, casual dining table and chairs, fireplace and television; and outdoor seating by the pool to enjoy almost year-round.

Beyond the pool, underneath the stargazing patio with a Plodes® geometric fire pit, is one of the home’s most enviable features — a 50,000-gallon cistern that collects rainwater for drinking, bathing and other household uses (the pool is supplied by well water).

“We love it,” says the homeowner. “Using rainwater was a totally new concept to us, but after learning more from Peter [Pfeiffer] we decided we definitely wanted it.” Even with the ever-present prospect of Texas droughts, so far so good. “We’ve had no issues, and the water is amazing. No funky

taste, no metals, it’s delicious.” Rainwater is collected off the roof, through a filter into the cistern, and is filtered again as it’s pumped into the house.

Hard pressed to name a favorite feature of the home (“There’s so much to love,” she says), the homeowner sums it up by describing it as “very livable.” Low utility bills, abundant natural light, and a place that is comfortable inside and out even on the hottest days are a few faves.

Mostly, she offers, it’s how the house suits itself to its inhabitants at all times. “When it’s just us, watching a movie in the living room or having dinner on the screened porch, the house feels really good and cozy.” The addition of friends and colleagues doesn’t change its livability. “The design is such that whether it’s just the family hanging out, or we’re hosting dozens for a gathering, the house works.” ♦

ARCHITECT Barley | Pfeiffer Architecture
512-476-8580 | www.barleypfeiffer.com

BUILDER Oliver Custom Homes
512-845-0208 | www.olivercustomhomes.com

DESIGN Panache Interiors
512-452-7773 | www.panacheinteriors.com