

NOSTALGIA FOR NEW ENGLAND

ARCHITECT JED DUHON DESIGNS A CAPE COD-STYLE HOME
WITHIN THE CONFINES OF LIMITED SPACE
AND THE TEXAS CLIMATE.

By **Ann Koehler** | Photography by **Andrea Calo**





WHEN CONTEMPLATING THE ARCHITECTURE OF their future house, the wife of the couple, a native New Yorker who married a native Texan, wanted to bring the spirit of her Northeastern roots to her new home. To architect Jed Duhon of Studio Steinbomer, the instructions were clear: design a New England-style house in the heart of Austin with the natural light of a Cape Cod cottage, materials true to the northeast region and the open floor plan of a typical coastal house. This

meant foregoing the established Central Texas vernacular of limestone, glass and steel, and instead evoking a cottage vibe combined with the comfort of a casual Hamptons' beach house through form and material. In addition, chasing the amazing views from this Northwest Hills site meant positioning spaces to face the wide-open landscape. And finally, the family of five (and one energetic Goldendoodle) wanted one bedroom for each person, a guest room, a media room and a home office.

These requirements posed several challenges for Duhon and his team. Preserving the characteristics of New England architecture while shielding windows and walls from the brutal Texas sun was a primary concern. Plus, the architects needed to blend the house into the existing Austin neighborhood context. But it was the limited buildable area of the downward sloping lot that created a conundrum. "The owners purchased a beautiful lot with fantastic views overlooking



the Cat Mountain preserve,” says Duhon of the pie-shaped site that expands outward from the narrow point at the street, with a steep drop in the back. If Duhon pushed the house back far enough to accommodate the design, the site falls off. In the end he perched the house on the edge of the hill, 80 feet from the front property line, creating a three-story plan that appears as a context-friendly, two-story house from the street, with the third “basement” level below that accommodates the media room, exercise room and bar, and opens to the pool deck.

The design process took some eight months with interior designer Amity Worrel joining the team in the early days. Duhon adapted the recognizable Hamptons’ architectural profile of gabled rooflines and deep porches with subtle gestures to insert the house into the Texas context — eschewing shingles for a darker Oklahoma stone, for example, and incorporating artisanal siding to soften the large home’s presence. “Our team quickly embraced the idea of designing a home that kept true to the New England heritage with the steep roofs, large windows, exposed wood beams and a central fireplace. The abundance of natural light was key to recreating the warm, cozy feeling everyone expects with a Cape Cod home, although we all know the Texas sun is not always our friend. Therefore, we oriented the house so



that the front and back patios shield the home from intense sunlight while keeping smaller overhangs typical of the Cape Cod style, instead of providing deep overhangs that we often use to protect the windows from direct sun. We creatively used dormer windows on the north side of the house to bring natural light through angled light wells into the main living area, which balanced the light partially dimmed by the large covered patio,” explains Duhon.

On the main floor, all rooms orient towards the view to the north, with a covered porch accessible from the master suite, guestroom, main living, dining and kitchen areas, and over-



looking the pool and patio below. Upstairs are the three kids' rooms for a total of five bedrooms and five baths — just what the homeowners wanted — in approximately 5,900 square feet of conditioned space.

While Duhon had involvement in the interior materials, Worrel worked closely with the homeowner to select finishes and furnishings. She explains, “My team pulled finish materials that spoke to the client’s East Coast casual style but elevated taste. She approaches the world in a very unpretentious and ‘family first’ way, doesn’t take herself too seriously, is funny and fun to work with and was open to a true collaboration.”

Worrel incorporated contemporary and vintage furniture pieces to create comfortable and flexible lounging areas for the family to gather, saying, “The homeowner’s existing pieces were used in the dining room, office and the master bedroom but otherwise, because this new home was larger than their last, we did new custom pieces for the other areas.”

New upholstered pieces in subtly patterned indoor/outdoor fabrics add refined texture that will stand the test of time (and kids). Worrel says the color palette was led by the homeowner’s love of soft, tonal spaces that feel beachy and light but are elevated and traditional. “She appreciated texture in materials so we were happy to bring that in in the fabrics and window treatments. The palette feels natural and is guided by the undertones in the finish materials such as the marble floor in the master bathroom, the lovely bleached wood floors in the main areas and the bluestone in the mud room,” she adds.

Deliberately unpretentious but elegant, details include

Indigo Lotus wallpaper in the office and a hand-painted terracotta tile backsplash in the kitchen. A visit to a local reclaimed lumber yard yielded the perfect pieces that were milled to create shelving for the living room and bar, as well as the legs and base for the kitchen island. The island counters are honed Absolute Black Granite and the periphery counters are Calacatta Gold polished marble, both from Toor™ Stone Countertops, who also supplied the master and guest bath counters. The combination of timeless finishes, traditional fixture profiles, serene color palettes, natural materials and contemporary mixed metals responded to the client’s vision of a casual but sophisticated interior.

Key design features that the homeowner refers to as “life-changing” include a large laundry room serviced by a laundry chute located upstairs near the kids’ rooms, and a mud room with individual cubbies and hanging space for each family member.

For this family of five, the form, function and indoor/outdoor flow of their new home makes daily life a joy and entertaining a breeze. Friends happily accept invitations most weekends (and have been known to invite themselves) to enjoy the views, the pool and the company. ♦

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