

COLORADO **URBAN**

HOME

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CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE

HOME
TECHNOLOGY
TRENDS

Greenwood Cabinets & Stone
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FOREVER AND TODAY

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Fine Focus Photography (Tre Dunham)





WHAT HAPPENS TO A HOUSE WHEN THE FAMILY WHO lives there has two young boys, busy doing what all boys do - running in and out of the back door, to and from the pool, dripping water all the way, bumping chairs into the walls, and dropping objects on the floor? If the home isn't well designed in anticipation of this sort of activity, the family may end up with some bummed-out living spaces.

With her active family of boys, homeowner DeAnn Murphy knew up front her forever home had to be designed in a family friendly manner, with durable finishes and a room layout that made sense for her family's way of living. Her wish list didn't end there. She also wanted a

modern home that leaned toward warmth, not starkness.

During the interviews for choosing the design and construction team members, she and her husband, John, allowed those two priorities to drive the decision-making process. In the end, they chose architect Neel Morton, AIA, of Office of Architecture and Grady Burnette of Grady Burnette Builders — Morton because of his dual focus in residential and modern commercial architecture and Burnette because of his reputation for adding a modern flair to traditional construction.

"I knew how we wanted to live and how the house needed to function for my family," Murphy says, "but I had no idea what that



would look like.”

In designing the home, Morton faced not only the challenge of meeting Murphy’s family friendly expectations but also adjusting to site challenges that included poor soil and a potential lack of privacy. An initial soil test revealed an unexpected twist; borings showed expansive soil on the building site, which would not provide a stable base for the house’s foundation. A nearby creek made the lot inviting as a home site and worth the added expense to remove and replace more than two feet of soil with a compacted base.

The 3.5-acre lot is long and narrow, running parallel with the creek.

Neighbors occupy houses on the other side of the narrow creek, so the family wanted a visual connection to the water but needed some privacy.

Morton creatively answered the need with a sprawling, single-story home design, stretching the house the length of the creek but stepping back portions of the house that contain the private rooms to screen them from direct views. Designing a series of layers surrounding the pool and small courtyard area amped up the home’s privacy and family friendly features.

“The separate guest house creates a screen for the main house from the neighbors,” Morton says. “The public parts of the house are in the





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next layer. Then we stepped back the bedrooms in the third layer but still allowed creek views from the master bedroom.”

In designing for privacy, Morton also incorporated features appealing to parents of small children, allowing them to keep all eyes on their active children as they splashed in and out of the pool. The guest house, in which the grandparents stay, the conical-shaped home office, and the main living areas look out over the pool. This design enables at least one adult to watch the goings-on outside while continuing to work inside.

“The separation of public versus private spaces works for us,” Murphy says.

This design has an added advantage, according to Morton. Thin houses, that is, those that are one room deep, circulate air throughout the house more readily.

“The design is creative but still site-influenced,” Morton says. “The house is not forced onto the site.”

3-D modeling software enabled Morton to provide real-life views for the Murphys of what the house would look like and how it would function before the builder even broke ground.

“3-D modeling is such an excellent tool because it gives clients a level of trust,” Morton says.

Inside the house, durable finishes hold up to





roughhousing and everyday wear. Burnette turned the Murphy family on to a unique flooring finish for the main living spaces that he knew could stand up to whatever bruises came its way.

“Polished concrete is very durable and stain resistant,” says Burnette, who showed Murphy the finished result in another house before she made the choice. “It is not stained but is ground down in a multi-step process with diamond-impregnated sanding disks until it is glasslike. It’s an interesting look.”

In keeping with hardy raw materials, Burnette and Morton helped the family choose two shades of Lueders limestone from a Texas quarry for the kitchen countertops and a fireplace surround. To keep the look on the modern side, the ventless gas firebox is installed in a contemporary rectangular shape and inlaid flush with the surrounding stone without a hearth, mantel or flue. Contemporary light fixtures, walls of windows in the main living spaces, and small touches such as frameless shower doors keep the feeling light and modern while other parts of the house live more traditionally. Warm wood on the bedroom floors and on bathroom ceilings prevent the look from becoming stark.

Despite all the practicality, Murphy didn’t ignore the opportunity to work in touches of



beauty. One of her best ideas is the backlit onyx backsplash in the wine bar, which took hours of research and a couple of redos to find the LED panels that worked to best effect.

“It turned out lovely,” Murphy says. “I like to turn it on in the evenings since it links the kitchen and the boys’ playroom.”

Morton highlighted another unique touch in the boys’ bathroom floor, which is polished concrete with fluorite added immediately after the concrete is poured but before it hardens.

“DeAnn came up with this idea, and it works beautifully. The fluorite gets slightly polished so it’s just below the surface and glows in the dark,” Morton says.

Paired with red quartz countertops, it is fun and dynamic.

This modest home encompasses all the family wants at this point in their lives, but Murphy can see a day when the kid-friendly rooms can be transformed easily into adult spaces when necessary. For now, the parents and grandparents enjoy watching the kids revel in their time in their forever home. ❖