

# AUSTIN HOME

Austin & The Hill Country

DESIGN DARLINGS

Inside the Houses  
On the AIA Austin  
Homes Tour

URBAN LIVING

Nine Essentials  
For a Timeless  
Downtown Loft









BY **GENE MENEZ**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **CASEY DUNN**



# **More than**

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# **Meets the Eye**

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The most imaginative feature of this home along Lake Austin is something that's not even there



# What do you

see in the photos adjacent to this story?

Do you see a house? Do you see a lake house? Do you see a 6,700-square-foot, six-bedroom lake house with contemporary lines and sophisticated furnishings? Do you see a joy-filled home for a family of five?

The lake house in these photos is indeed all of these things. But, much like the lack of straps on a Vera Wang wedding dress, the actual genius in the design of this home is not what's there but rather what is *not*.

But more on that later. You can see or not see the house for yourself on Oct. 28-29, when the home will be the signature stop of 13 projects featured on the 2017 AIA Austin Homes Tour (*page 94*), the annual celebration of the best in local residential architecture over the past year.


Eric Barth and Ryan Burke, co-principals of A Parallel Architecture, remember meeting with a potential new client in 2014. The man, who declined to be interviewed for this story, owned two neighboring narrow lots on the Lake Austin waterfront in Windy Cove, just a mile down the Colorado River from the Pennybacker Bridge. He had called the architects because he wanted to combine the lots and build a new home for him, his wife and their three school-age children.

Barth recalls the man being decisive, prepared, on a tight timeline and ready to knock the project out of the park. His needs were straightforward: a home that took advantage of the views of the lake, promoted family cohesion and was durable enough for three growing kids and two dogs.

They wanted this to be a very livable, comfortable lake home, Barth





A photograph of a modern dining and kitchen area. The ceiling is made of horizontal wooden slats. The walls are a mix of light-colored stone and dark wood paneling. A long wooden dining table is on the left, and a kitchen island with a white countertop and wooden base is on the right. Large windows and glass doors provide a view of the outdoors. A text box in the upper right corner explains the design choice of a cedar scrim above the dining table.

Even though there are no walls, the presence of a cedar scrim above the dining table helps define the dining space; when the glass doors are opened, the living room (opposite) has an unencumbered view of the outside, thanks to the lack of load-bearing columns.









The home had to be drawn up to thread through several heritage sycamore, pecan and cypress trees on the lot, but the design still maximizes the footprint available for the house.





**“The project was always a balance between How do you emphasize all of the fun of the lake but also create a private home?” Burke says.**







◀ On both the exterior (opposite bottom) and interior (opposite top), the home has been designed to have a neutral color palette, allowing the homeowners' bold artwork to better stand out; from the tub in the master bathroom (above) to the pool to the lake, water has a significant presence in the home.

recalls. "They did not want a museum-like space that they felt was too precious to lounge around in on Sunday morning."

Even though the client's requirements were simple, the design challenge was not.

"The project was always a balance between How do you emphasize all of the fun of the lake but also create something that's very much a private home?" Burke says.

A Parallel's design does just that. As visitors to the house in October will see, there is no gate or fence enclosing the home from its eclectic neighborhood, something unusual for a home of this size. The supersize front yard is large enough to accommodate the children and dogs.

Several heritage sycamore, pecan and cypress trees dot the lot, so the footprint of the house bends around them. Hand-cut limestone and sapele siding help create a handsome exterior.

A small reflecting pool greets visitors as they approach the house. It is just the first sight of water on the property, where "you're very much in this water experience," Barth says.

An ipe walkway starts just outside the front door, leads into the house and runs straight to the back pier. All of the property's major public spaces—living room, kitchen, dining area, formal living room, patio, swimming pool and beach—are connected by the walkway.

"It's very much an axis through the house," Barth says.

The walkway essentially divides the home into two wings. The west wing is composed of the open-concept living-kitchen-dining area, the kids' three bedrooms and a kids' game room, complete with pool and shuffleboard tables and two 80-inch televisions.

"It's like a full-on sports bar in there," Barth says.

In addition, a 200-square-foot army-barracks-style bunk room, which can only be accessed from outside the house, provides sleeping quarters for up to 10 on the occasions when the kids want to have sleepovers.

Meanwhile, the east wing is made up of the formal living room (anchored by a two-sided wood-burning fireplace), master suite and a small desk space. A second story features a guest room and an office leading to a roof deck, which Barth calls the "prime spot" of the house because of its unsurpassed view of the backyard and lake.

Though the office might have the best vantage point of the water, the lake can be seen from every primary room in the house. It's a view that can settle those with even the most frayed nerves.

"When you look across the lake, you're not looking at a bunch of houses and boat docks," Barth says. "It's very peaceful, and you're looking at trees. And as long as there are not boats screaming down the river, it's a very placid lake experience."

The view of the lake from inside the house is enhanced by a special feature in A Parallel's design. This is where the what's-not-there genius (as hinted at above) comes in. Barth and Burke designed for the roof to be suspended from a beam, rather than the traditional way of supporting the roof with columns. So what's not there (load-bearing columns) only strengthens the view.

This architectural and engineering twist (Sam Stewart Custom Homes was the builder) is most evident in the formal and informal living rooms, which both have multiple sliding glass doors (14 feet tall in the informal living room and 10 feet tall in the formal) that pocket into the walls. The









curtains disappear into the wall as well. With the doors opened and the curtains pulled back, the view of the lake is completely unobscured.

The interior spaces feature a mostly neutral color palette, which best complements the homeowner's bold art collection, many pieces of which he commissioned just for the home. The white oak floors and furniture, selected by Ladco of Houston, mostly follow that neutral color theme.

The outdoor spaces take advantage of lake life as well. A boat dock in a channel on the west side of the property serves not only as parking for the family's two boats but also as a spot for the fishing-loving children to cast a line. The sandy beach allows the family to dip their toes in the lake. A sport court on the east side of the house gives the family different activity options.

And a negative-edge pool is a popular place for the family's children to hang out and take advantage of what this home was designed for: living.

It is rewarding to see the architecture is not prohibiting them from being kids or the parents from living their lives, Burke says. I've seen a lot of houses where the parents are like, 'Don't touch that! Are you crazy? Don't do that!' It's just a very durable, no-nonsense house that has all of these layers of benefits, amenities and thoughtfulness. You can appreciate architecture, and you can appreciate a home, and those two can be one and the same! ■



The ipe walkway (opposite page) runs straight through the home and all the way to the lake, effectively dividing the house into east and west wings. A 15-foot overhang (above) helps protect the back of the home from direct sunlight.