

FOOTHILLS FUSION

By Dana W. Todd

THE BEAUTY OF THE 9,000-SQUARE-FOOT HOUSE

that sits in a new golf community at the base of Jackson Hole Mountain resort in Teton Village, Wyoming, belies the challenges architect Steve Dynia faced designing and overseeing construction of it. He dealt with site challenges, negotiations with a conservative design review board, and the dangers of being the first house on the block.

Making the Most of Landscape

One of Dynia's primary concerns was preserving the natural views, even expanding the views from the house's interior, as much as possible. Why live at the base of a beautiful ski mountain surrounded by willows and wildlife if you can't readily see them from the main living spaces of the house? To achieve optimum viewing capability from the inside, he designed a floating ceiling over the central pavilion that contains the main living areas - family room, dining room, kitchen, and entryway.

"The floating ceiling is an attempt to claim the unique landscape as part of the house," says Dynia. "The shaped ceiling has a 'valley' running through it diagonally. The two planes of the ceiling

rise to a high point at each end, meeting glass walls."

On the northwest side of the house, the ceiling rises to the corner to capture mountain views from the living room. Across the way, the ceiling rises to the southeastern corner to capture an abundance of daylight through 14-foot triple-pane glass windows to warm interior spaces.

"I am always conscious of getting early light into the house," Dynia says. He goes so far as to venture to say the ceiling is like standing under a whale, an interesting ceiling form albeit one that serves a practical purpose.

Dynia spent much time orienting the house since it was the first one built in the soon-to-be densely populated community, a dangerous proposition. He located the structure on the one-acre lot to ensure views of nature would not be blocked and to maintain property value as other homeowners built on neighboring lots.

Outside, the house is minimally landscaped into four pinwheel quadrants surrounding the exterior. A spa and deck face south, a seating area provides mountain views on the northern side, a private garden anchors another end and links with the interior space through huge sliding glass doors, and the fourth quadrant serves as an entry courtyard and garage entrance.





Obtaining Approval

The homeowners did not have the luxury of building the modern house they wanted inside and out. The community's developer implemented a design review board that was tasked with approving all exterior architectural plans before construction could begin. The review board's guidelines included a requirement for all houses to have a traditional pitched gable roof and wood siding, features not in sync with modern design. Dynia designed a home that appears traditional on the outside with all the modern touches inside the homeowners craved.

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“My job was to figure out how to capitalize on the design schizophrenia,” Dynia says. He followed the gable roof requirements and used both stained and unstained cedar planks to side the house, moving between horizontal and vertical orientation to add interest. He fused the two architectural strategies by incorporating modern materials such as stained concrete floors and walls, expansive glass, and white lacquered cabinetry with more traditional substances like limestone countertops and walnut room divider panels.

Two modern-styled stairways off the central pavilion lead to double-story offset wings containing the private rooms. One stairway leads to a three-car garage, an apartment, children’s bedrooms, and a TV room. The other stairway leads to the north wing housing an office, the master suite, theater, and guest room. The sculptural ceiling floats above the main rooms in the pavilion,



lending modern interest in addition to its job of maximizing landscape views. The elevated pavilion rooms help ensure views are always available.

Even though the concrete walls and floors enhance the modern feel, they serve a structural purpose, too. With such an open concept plan, they are the sole supports of the house and are rigid enough to provide stability in this high earthquake zone prevalent to heavy snow loads. No walls touch the floating ceiling except for the ones containing the fireplace and the kitchen stove, neither of which are load bearing. The partial walls, such as those in the hallway and the movable wall that separates the kitchen from the other main areas, provide a sense of privacy and storage yet maintain the benefits of an open plan.



Sourcing Green Materials and Methods

Although Dynia says any discussion of sustainability is not as relevant in a house with such a large footprint, he took care to make green decisions during the design phase. Concrete floors, for example, hold heat and come from locally sourced earth materials. Hydronic heating is fuel efficient, and glass windows are triple paned.

“The house is super insulated,” Dynia says. “We were abiding by the strictest energy codes.”

The structure, as mentioned above, is oriented to take advantage of everything the natural elements have to offer.

Above all, the house is an example of design practicality within parameters. Dynia shows how it’s possible to meld the wants of a homeowner - modern design and great views - with the required mandates of an external review board and land limitations and considerations. The result is a fusion of traditional and modern design that lives practically and beautifully.❖