



A “FOREVER” HOME

By **JACKIE BENTON** | Photography by **CHRISTOPHER DAVISON**

It was the perfect new homeowner nightmare: the water pipes burst in her new home before she had moved in, and the damage was extensive. It was definitely a Homeowner 911 situation. When Realty Restoration, LLC, Recek Architects and Twelve Stones Designs were contacted to help, their design team quickly moved into action, using their award-winning design/build relationship to make the best of this disaster. By renovating, remodeling and upgrading where needed, they maintained the home’s beloved natural aesthetics to create a “forever” home for their client and her three little dogs.

With its secluded and private location atop a hill offering a 360-degree view of Austin, the team quickly worked together on a plan to bring that sense of natural beauty and openness to help with the project’s sense of flow and balance between the home’s indoor space and the outside entertainment area, creating a unifying aesthetic between the home’s additions and updates with the original home design.

“Our client moved here from the Dallas-Fort Worth area to be near her family and grandchildren,” says James A. Recek, AIA of Recek Architects. “The extensive water damage led to an expanded scope of renovation in some areas, additions to accommodate their frequent visits and a pet-friendly home for her dogs. We felt that the client wanted to take the house to another level. She had a need for more space to allow her to make this her “forever” home and allow her to entertain her family and friends. We felt that her desires were to stay in tune with the existing nature and style because that’s what attracted her to the original home.”

“Having her grown daughter’s family located in Austin enhanced the client’s desire to create a sanctuary, complete with an amazing outdoor living space for entertaining,” says



David Davison, certified remodeler and president of Realty Restoration, LLC. “Our team worked hard to facilitate the feeling of bringing the outside indoors and vice versa to create a harmonious transition between spaces.”

Christy Bowen, certified kitchen and bath designer and owner of Twelve Stones Designs, describes the original house as a single-story rambling ranch-style home with a master suite at one end, and a single bedroom and standard bathroom at the opposite end. “The foyer split the living room from the kitchen and dining room areas,” says Bowen. “Even though the house seemed spacious due to lots of windows and natural

light, the square footage was actually quite inadequate for an average household.

“This was an expansive addition and remodel project. Our team remodeled the foyer, kitchen, guest room, laundry room, dining room and guest bathroom,” says Bowen. “We added on an upstairs guest suite complete with full bath and an auxiliary space which the owner will use as her sewing room. We also added on a new dining room, large screened porch, an exercise room, a new expansive master closet and gallery. Exterior upgrades to the house and detached garage were an additional part of the scope as well.”

The project was not without its challenges, says Davison, which included the city of Austin’s constraints regarding impervious cover overlays for the property, while trying to balance the client’s desires for additional space with the allowable square footages. “This property presented some unique challenges since it is in the Austin extraterritorial jurisdiction, but not served by the Austin Fire Department, nor by city of Austin water services,” says Davison. “Fire codes dictated we provide an automatic fire sprinkler system for all the additional square footage, while maintaining the residential character of the design. Much effort was put into concealing



the system and providing the water storage and pump system in a remote building.”

Davison upgraded or replaced all electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems. For year-round comfort, variable speed air conditioning units and air handlers were installed, to help control interior humidity on hyper-insulated building envelopes such as this one. The additions utilized spray foam at the roof decks, which created conditioned space of the attic, thus reducing the required tonnage of mechanical systems and corresponding utility consumption. In addition, an extensive rain water collection system provides water for the majority of the landscape sprinkler system.

Special touches can be found throughout the home. Appliance upgrades include a full professional suite of Thermador® appliances, with kitchen cabinets from Brookhaven by Wood-Mode® Fine Custom Cabinetry. A rare Minas soapstone graces the kitchen island and guest suite vanity countertops, while Lustrolite panels in the downstairs guest bath create a sleek look yet requires very low maintenance.

In addition to the much-needed repair and renovation work from the flood damage, the team worked with the client to give her home those little personal touches that would suit her lifestyle and would elevate her experience living there.

“The client had a laundry list of items she wanted to make this her final home purchase and more suitable to her lifestyle,” explains Bowen. “She requested cabinets and built-ins to the ceiling for maximum storage and for the over-sized glamorous aesthetic. She also desired more closet space and an exercise room that would lead into her ‘Zen’ garden. She wanted to capitalize on the expansive views and have as much connection to the outdoors as possible.”

And then there were the special touches for the client’s little dogs, to make the home as comfortable and accommodating for them as it was for her. “There were little specialty items here and there for her three small dogs,” says Bowen. “For example, she

wanted a security dog door leading from her master suite wing to the dog run with a custom stainless steel niche and shelf for the dogs’ water bowls. She asked for a glass sash in the laundry room door in order to be able to corral the pups when needed but still be able to see them. And she wanted a terrazzo apron sink and an ergonomic, hand-held shower head that would make it easy to wash the dogs.”

The result is a look that combines modern with classic, and an impish sense of fun. “The house has more of a vintage-eclectic feel to it now,” says Bowen. “We mixed modern lines with classic shapes and materials to create a funky-yet-timeless look. All the materials are durable, but will wear and patina naturally with the home to retain a renaissance look. The homeowner is drawn to the glamorous 1930’s Hollywood style; a time when masculine, geometric, Art Deco lines co-mingled with the feminine, button-tufted look of the Victorian era. It’s a great combination and I loved creating that look, but with a 21st Century twist!”

Recek is also pleased with the completion of the product. “The existing home had a lot of natural materials in tune with the Hill Country feel and its surroundings. The new work keeps this aesthetic but elevates the finishes with softly gleaming accents,” says Recek. “This is one of those rare projects for a special client working with our team who was willing to see all the pieces work hand-in-hand together to create a truly spectacular home. The attention to detail by everyone at all levels during the project truly put this a notch above everything else!” ❖

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