

Triangle

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# HOME

DESIGN & DECOR



Contributing Editor  
BUILDING A  
BETTER HOME



E V A N B O S T



## THE ULTIMATE UPGRADE

# *Navigating through the intersection of beautiful design and energy efficiency produces exquisite results with a contemporary prairie-style dream home.*

For nearly two decades, Scott Berkowitz and Ruth Ewing Berkowitz knew they would retire in the Durham-Chapel Hill area. The couple resided here when Scott was a professor at Duke University during the '90s, and their children have always called the Triangle home. In 2014, the time came to look at properties for relocation in the area, and the initial thought was to find an existing home that met their desires. That all changed when a wooded lot in a well-appointed neighborhood presented itself and sparked the idea of “why not *build* our perfect home?”

They quickly found the ideal house plan, a Prairie-style design by architect Michael

Barclay, reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright homes from their old stomping grounds of Wilmington, Delaware. With the conviction to build a highly-efficient residence and durable structure of quality construction, Ruth and Scott selected Bost Custom Homes to bring their forever home to fruition, which was completed just in time to ring in 2017. Throughout the design-build process, the couple continuously made bold choices in design and energy efficiency features.

“I really wanted to plan ahead and think about our future needs. We decided to invest in renewable energy sources and structural details that will add long-term value and reduce ownership costs,” Scott remarks. Indeed, their home is one of the most sustainable we’ve ever built.

Beginning with Prairie-style architecture, the low-pitched hipped roof with large overhangs shade the windows and living areas during the summer. In winter, the south-facing, window-laden rear of the home basks in sunlight, welcoming heat gain and natural daylight. Low-pitched roofs are ideal for solar energy generation, and this roof hosts a 6.1 kW monocrystalline solar array, which offsets more than half of the home’s energy requirements.

Regarding the home’s HVAC, Scott opted for two geothermal heat pumps, conditioning the bedrooms and main living areas separately. Geothermal systems leverage the constant 50°-60° temperature deep underground to help cool the home in the





summer and heat it in the winter. Retaining that thermal energy is a full spray foam insulation package, aligned air barrier, conditioned attics and conditioned mechanical rooms. Among other forward-thinking features, this home wouldn't be complete without an electric car charger for Scott's Tesla. The anticipated HERS score for this home is ~20.

Coming from a 15-year-old home, building performance wasn't the only design area that they updated into modernity. Ruth's interior design style made a gradual, yet drastic transformation over the course of the project. As they met with Design Works Studios and various showrooms across the Triangle, the client made bold, elegantly contemporary selections.

Their former home was traditional Colonial inside and out, and much of their furniture did not jive with the new direction. "It was kind of tough, actually, to go through our previous home and decide which pieces wouldn't make the cut," Ruth recalls. But the results of the new direction are so worth it.

Stunning natural finish Bamboo cabinetry cascades through the kitchen and spills onto Cumuru flooring. Across the room, Copper Bay ledgestone was carried inside and wrapped around the fireplace and columns, while a floating steel grey granite hearth and mantel contrast brilliantly. An onyx sink bowl, wall-mounted toilet and LED lighting fixtures enliven the powder room. And my personal favorite feature, Scott and Ruth wanted a cantilevered staircase wrapped in Cumuru leading to the daylight basement. Project Manager Pedro Martinez enhanced this feature with an idea to veneer the stairwell with Copper Bay ledgestone. The clients loved this idea so much they call it the "Martinez wall." Thank you, Scott and Ruth, for being such incredible clients and manifesting a beautiful vision for your dream home! ♦



Evan Bost is Director of Marketing and Green Initiatives at Bost Custom Homes, an award-winning custom building firm serving the Triangle. With 30 years of proven expertise, Bost Homes designs and constructs truly-custom residences with superior craftsmanship, a focus on health and sustainability, architectural authenticity and structural integrity. To begin the conversation of your forever home, call 919-460-1983 or message [info@bosthomes.com](mailto:info@bosthomes.com). Learn more at [www.BostHomes.com](http://www.BostHomes.com) or [www.facebook.com/bostcustomhomes](http://www.facebook.com/bostcustomhomes).