

Triangle

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021

# HOME

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Griffith and the homeowners opted for a concrete tile backsplash and granite countertops in Kashmir White.



# *Contemporary CUBE*

ARCHITECT MATTHEW GRIFFITH TAKES ON ONE OF HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGES: DESIGNING A 3,200-SQUARE-FOOT HOME ON ONE OF THE SMALLEST BUILDABLE LOTS IN DOWNTOWN RALEIGH.

WRITTEN BY BLAKE MILLER

Matthew Griffith loves a challenge. In fact, the Raleigh-based architect thrives on obstacles when it comes to designing homes and commercial projects. “Most architects who are doing interesting work hope for constraints that create a thread of resistance,” he says. “Good design relies on resistance. Those challenges force you to solve problems and keep the process vibrant and the resulting design surprising and unique.”

Griffith’s project, located in the Hungry Neck neighborhood of Raleigh, proved to be one of his firm’s most challenging architectural feats. The lot was just under one-tenth of an acre and one of the smallest buildable lots in all of Raleigh. “They wanted to build a single-family home, but they wanted a few things that were unique to this small of a lot,” Griffith says. Most notably, the clients wanted a two-car garage, an elevator, and sizable outdoor living, all of which presented a monumental task for the architect. “The architecture itself was not difficult, but the variances and setbacks proved to be the biggest hurdles with this project,” he says.

After many rounds of approvals from the city regarding permits, Griffith and his team were able to finally bring their modern design to fruition, all the while checking off must-haves on their clients’ wish list. “It was one of the hardest things we had to figure out from a single-family home perspective,” Griffith says. “But it was almost guaranteed we’d create something unique and disarming in the end.” Here’s a look at some of the most interesting architectural details of this 3,200-square-foot modern stunner in one of Raleigh’s up-and-coming neighborhoods.

## THE LAYOUT

“Most urban homes are designed as a *piano nobile*, meaning the first floor is the living space of the home,” Griffith says. “But because of the grade of the lot, resulting in the first level with a basement with minimal light, it made sense to put the main living spaces on the top floor.” With impressive views of downtown Raleigh, it also made more sense to design the floorplan so that the kitchen, family room, and dining areas were all on the top floor with the private spaces like the bedrooms on the second floor.

# architecture

**LEFT:** The home's modern architecture resembles a glowing cube at nightfall. The main body of the house is James Hardie Artisan six-inch V-groove in a vertical orientation with accent pieces that are either HardiePanel or brake metal.

**TOP RIGHT:** To accommodate the lot, Griffith had to dig a basement floor to make the home level to the street. This level functions as the entry to the home as well as another living space.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Because the stairway is frequently used, Griffith designed the space with a creative spin. Open steel and oak treads give way to mesh metal screens, which tie the stairway together and also serve as pseudo artwork. "It's one of the primary experiences in the home," Griffith says.

## THE STAIRS

Moving between floors requires accessing the stairway the majority of the time. So Griffith wanted that space to be interesting and unique in its design. A steel and oak staircase with open treads supported by a mesh metal screen winds its way up the three stories of the house like a piece of art while allowing natural light to flood the home.

## THE OUTDOOR LIVING

One of the homeowners' must-haves was ample outdoor living space. But with such a small lot, Griffith and his team had to get creative



# architecture

**TOP:** Griffith opted for "a really durable material palette" for the entire home, including synthetic quartz countertops in the bathroom. Ceramic tiles, which mimic slate, cover the floors.

**BOTTOM:** To balance the modern lines and materials throughout the interior of the home, Griffith added white oak in places like the living room built-in shelves and the flooring throughout the main living areas.

when it came to adding space without sacrificing square footage. Along the south side of the home he added a two-story deck, which is easily accessed by a large sliding door, making the transition from inside to outside seamless. The courtyard below is defined by a concrete wall that provides instant privacy.

## THE MATERIALS

In keeping with a modern aesthetic, Griffith used concrete tile for the backsplash to mirror the concrete detailing of the main structure. Doses of Ipe Brazilian wood help warm the industrial lines of the interiors while also adding an organic feel to the living spaces. ♦

