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A MEETING OF MINDS

Collaboration and communication fostered the design process for this North Vancouver home

BY PHILLIPA RISPIN // PHOTOGRAPHY: EMA PETER





"I love concrete," homeowner Travis Cadieu says. "I love the kitchen countertops and the fireplace." He also loves how the kitchen countertop extends outside to form a little bar. "It blends seamlessly with the indoor space," he says.

Sustainability and energy efficiency are key concepts; thus the green garage roof and the rooftop-mounted solar panels from Terratek Energy Solutions.

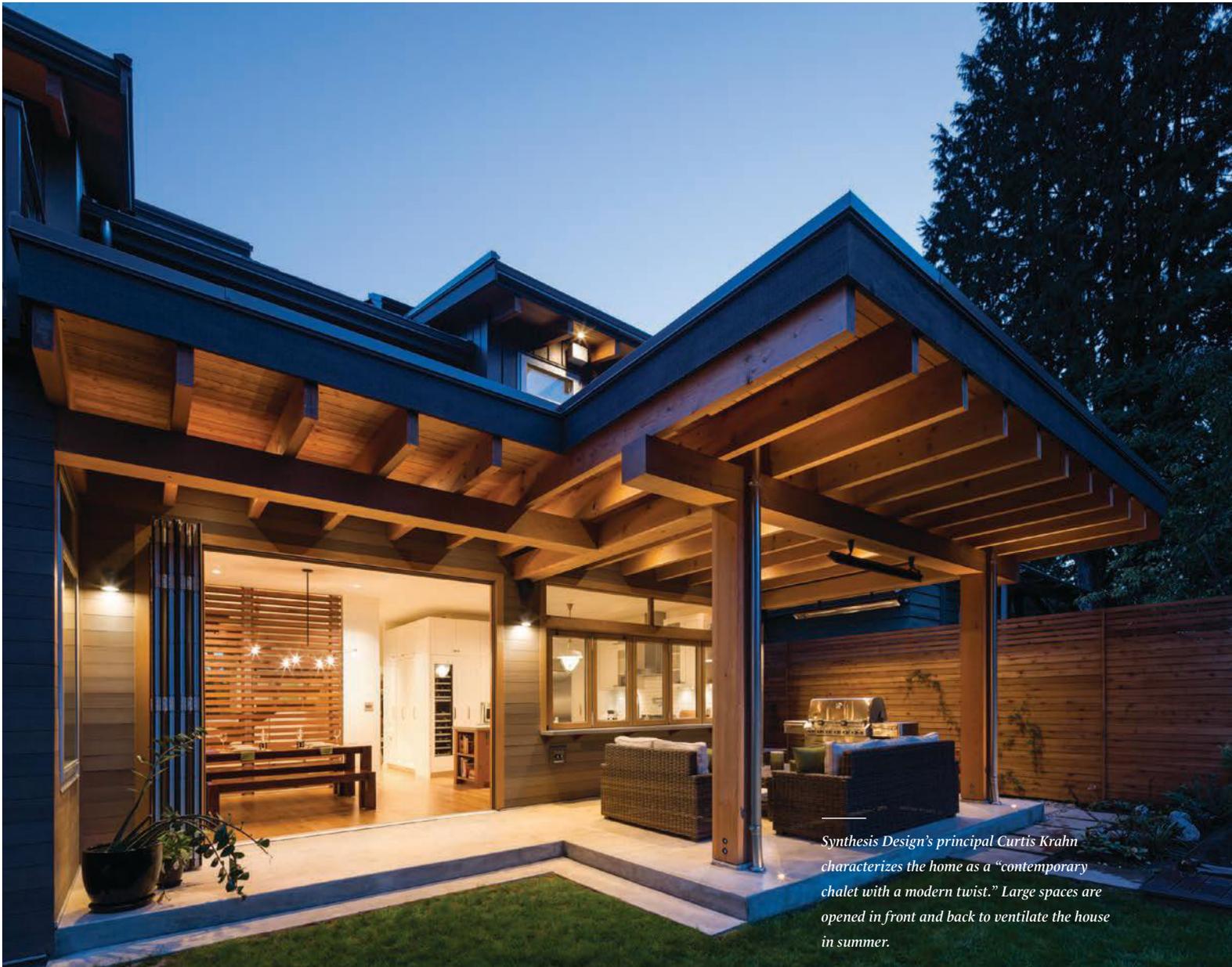


THREE GEORGIE AWARDS SO FAR this year, in the running for four Ovation awards, and also in the running for a National Award for Housing Excellence – there’s seemingly no end to the accolades this home has won or for which it’s nominated. But it’s not just a showplace; it’s truly a home, and that’s no surprise. The architectural designers, the contractor and the homeowners all worked together, sometimes intensely but always collaboratively, to produce this unique, slightly quirky home with a green soul.

The initial challenge was to design a home that met the two owners’ aesthetic desires. “We wanted something that appeared modern but at the same time had a couple of architectural details that were a bit more traditional, like a gabled roof,” says homeowner Travis Cadieu. “We’ve always been attracted to the architectural style that you see at Whistler, which is generous use of timbers and steep roofs, use of stone and concrete. We wanted to incorporate those design elements somehow in our house here

so we’re constantly reminded of them when we’re at home.”

The house also had to meet their lifestyle needs. Travis and his wife Beth are both busy physicians; Beth works days and Travis works various shifts as an emergency room doctor. They wanted a place to relax with their three young children, with a simple transition between indoors and out and the ability to keep an eye on the children in each space. They wanted to be able to communicate easily within the three-storey structure.



Synthesis Design's principal Curtis Krahn characterizes the home as a "contemporary chalet with a modern twist." Large spaces are opened in front and back to ventilate the house in summer.

Also, the house had to have environmentally friendly features. The design produced by Synthesis Design Inc. incorporates a green rooftop for the garage that attenuates heat, a rainwater collection system under the driveway, solar panels on the roof, LED lighting throughout, and triple-glazed argon windows.

"We realized that a site-built home could be wasteful in materials, and we almost considered a prefab house," says Travis. Instead, the couple had their custom-designed home built and they ensured that leftover materials, especially

timber, would be incorporated into the interior. Thus, extra fir was used to create benches and bookshelves, and leftover cedar was used to make the forms for the concrete fireplace and the wall in the main-floor powder room.

The house was designed and built with extensive input from Travis and Beth; it was teamwork all the way. "We had clear concepts when we went to meetings," says Travis. And there were many meetings, both before and during construction. Although the basic shell and interior of the house were decided before

ground was broken, Beth and especially Travis often came up with little tweaks or big new ideas that were discussed and incorporated or not.

The team at Synthesis Design included the firm's principal, Curtis Krahn, the lead architectural designer, Kevin Li, and lead interior designer Ken Best. "Beth and Travis were very engaged and super passionate about their notion of home, but they approached the design process in two different ways," says Krahn.

"Travis was all about the detail, the kit of parts and how those parts intricately went



“Beth and Travis were very engaged and super passionate about their notion of home, but they approached the design process in two different ways.”

Builder Joe Geluch is enthusiastic about the “pretty nifty” concrete features created by Yves St. Hilaire and team at Sticks & Stones Furniture: countertops and bar in the kitchen, the family room fireplace, the bathroom vanities.

(Opposite, bottom) The family room as viewed from the kitchen end of the dining table. The fireplace concrete was pressed with cedar forms that left their impressions in the surface.

together,” Krahn says. “He explored many different products, textures, shapes and sizes of things and put them together in unique ways . . . Travis kept us on our toes, for sure. I don’t think he slept for six months, and I think he liked it.

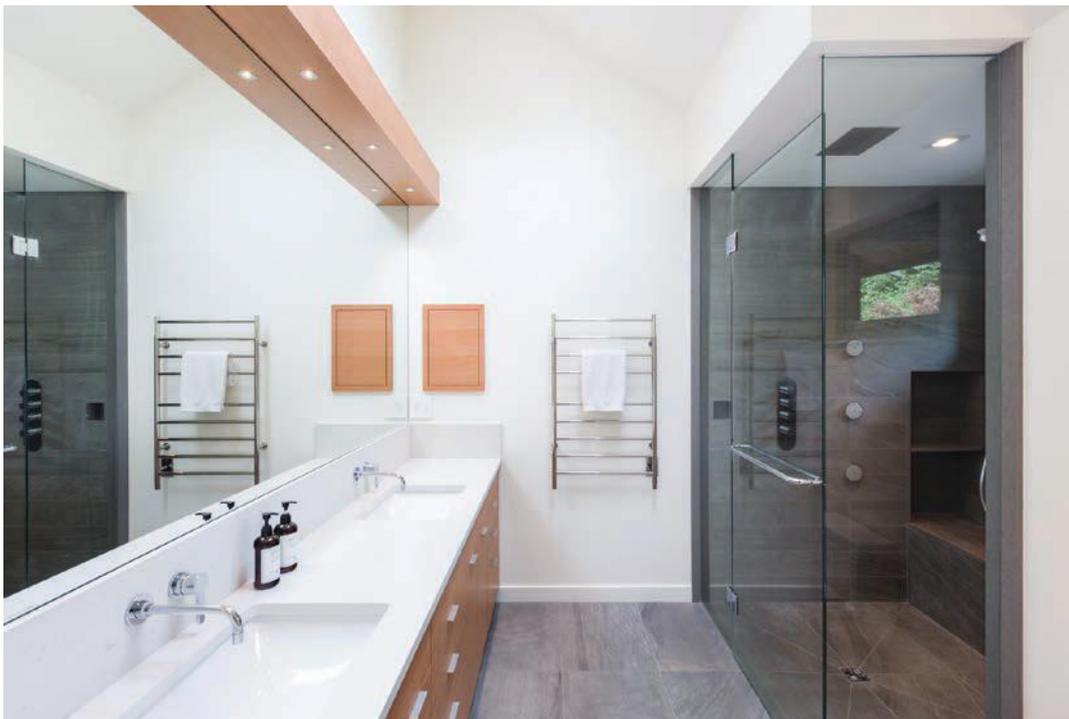
“Beth knew what she wanted. She knew what was best for her family. She listened and relied on Travis’s passion and attention to detail to decide on certain items. For other things, things she felt passionate about, she was steadfast in her decisions. They made for great clients because, while we usually are

tasked with helping clients make decisions or telling one why the other’s decision makes the most sense, they convinced each other.”

Contractor Joe Geluch and his team (which he describes as “hard-working, passionate”) at Naikoon Contracting Ltd. were an integral part of the consultations and were equally impressed by the homeowners’ involvement.

“There was certainly a lot of collaboration going on throughout construction – different ideas, features, and really tuning up the details of the home after the base design was





Beth's and Travis's desire for easy voice communication within the house was the basis for the open stairway in the middle of the ground floor. The staircase and slatted wood wall beside it are made from reclaimed fir beams.

In the upper landing, leftover fir was used to create a bench; it has a hidden lid at one end (not shown) that opens to the laundry chute. It's indicative of what one of Beth's and Travis's young daughters notes proudly: "This is what happens when two people have ideas." Curtis Krahn calls this "the quote of the project."



“It totally suits our lifestyle. We’re proud of our house.”

Beth’s favourite spot is the master bedroom. It’s a peaceful place with a view of the mountains. The walk-in closet and “huge” bathroom (opposite) are especially appreciated, too.

completed and construction started,” says Geluch. “It was a pleasure to build this house. It was great to have the influence of designers and clients.”

The home that resulted from this collaboration is an airy 3,800 square feet on three levels, with a striking staircase (looking airy in its own right) connecting all three. High ceilings, clean lines, abundant fenestration, folding doors that break the barrier between indoors and out, and judicious use of wood details

throughout make it the open, family-friendly home that Beth and Travis wanted.

“It totally suits our lifestyle,” Travis says. He remarks on “how easy it is to spend time both in and out on a warm day, and to feel how the energy of the family flows so freely from indoors to out.” In short, “We’re proud of our house.” ☛