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Tour a Brand-New Build in Crestview

The contemporary spec home meets the needs of modern homeowners

BY GENE MENEZ | PHOTOS BY ANDREA CALO



Whether it's a Saturday morning or Wednesday night, the tree-lined streets of Crestview bubble with activity. Neighbors walk their dogs. Children ride their bikes outside. Residents young and old share stories. Located in Central Austin, Crestview is very much like its surrounding neighborhoods in that way.

Once a dairy-farming area, the neighborhood began to grow in 1947 to meet the postwar demand for affordable housing. But today, many of those homes are being renovated or replaced to accommodate the needs of modern homeowners.



One of the newer homes is the two-story modern house of John Allison and Tim Packard on Piedmont Avenue. On a property that formerly featured a small two-bedroom from the 1950s, the new home has four bedrooms, covers 2,973 square feet and provides countless moments of awe.

It also is the culmination of a yearlong search by Allison and Packard to find just the right home for them and their two dogs, Luna and Marley.

"A lot of new properties that you look at have stuff you don't like," Allison says. "This house was really great. The builder made a lot of good choices. It's a good fit for us."

In 2016, Dominique Levesque of Dominique Levesque Construction teamed up with architect Nathan Winchester to design and build a modern spec home in the heart of Crestview. Their goal was "to build a house that would be more viable for a modern-day family," Levesque says.

The design included a white stucco exterior—which lends itself to a squared, modern aesthetic—lots of windows for natural light, crisp white walls and ample use of mahogany on the exterior (garage door and front entry vestibule) and interior (cabinetry). Winchester drew up the downstairs to be one big open kitchen-dining-living space leading to the backyard. The lower level also featured the master bedroom. Meanwhile, the upstairs was designed to have a sitting room, a long, gallerylike hallway with 10 windows and all three guest bedrooms. Construction wrapped up in May 2016.

About a month later, Packard, who has worked in real estate for 15 years, was searching houses online at 10:30 one rainy night when he came across Levesque's spec home. He alerted Allison, and the two immediately left their South Lamar residence to check out the property.

As they pulled up to the house, the first thing they noticed was the solid mahogany garage door with stainless steel inlays. (Another of Levesque's companies, Hill Country Doors & Woodworks, built the door.)

"The door was gleaming in the headlights as we pulled into the driveway," Allison recalls. "We said, 'Wow, that's a really cool door.' Since we couldn't get into the house until the next day, we were padding around the outside with umbrellas in the rain. The next day we made an offer on it."





Today, Allison and Packard have turned the spec home uniquely special. Allison, who's the co-owner of NEST Modern furniture store, has filled the home with mostly modern Italian pieces while mixing in vintage items when appropriate.

The living room may be the best example of something old and something new. The space features a Saba Italia platform sofa, a limited-edition Milo Baughman lounge chair (No. 21 of 60) and a Pianca Oplà armchair that's designed to look like an open tulip. All three pieces surround a coffee table that's made from a 400-year-old slab of cypress.

"Everyone remarks about the coffee table," Allison says. "It's really unusual."



Allison's mix of modern and vintage continues in the master bedroom, which has a Pianca bed, a Good Egg swivel chair by Milo Baughman and a vintage dresser. The room also features one of several abstract paintings in the house by San Antonio artist Sandy Whitby.

"John has such a great eye for design that he fell in love with the blank slate of the inside," Levesque says. "He filled in the blanks very nicely."

Allison and Packard have turned an upstairs sitting area into what they call the Vinyl Lounge, complete with vinyl records and a turntable. The homeowners can often be found here sipping cocktails with friends and listening to records.



But no other space gets as much use as their backyard pool and patio. Added after Allison and Packard bought the house, the area is completely covered in composite decking material and intentionally has a neutral color palette. “Even a lot of the furniture is colorless,” Allison says. That furniture, from Fermob, is made of aluminum and can sit in the water.

Every Fourth of July, Allison and Packard host a party for family and friends. (Packard is one of nine children, so guests are common.) And even in the winter, the homeowners host a pool party. Fear not; the pool is heated.

“We call it our Non-Polar Bear Party,” Allison says.



The house on Piedmont has become more than just a mere transaction between the homeowners and builder. Since buying the house, Allison and Packard have become friends and business partners with Levesque. Later in 2016, Allison and Packard bought the lot next door—an abandoned house Allison nicknamed The Squirrel Shack—had it demolished and hired Levesque to build a Craftsman-style house that they designed. (Levesque previously built the home on the other side of Allison and Packard's home, giving him three consecutive homes on the street.)

Allison also has helped Levesque and his wife, Barbara, fill out the interiors of their home in nearby Allandale, which shares many of the characteristics of Allison and Packard's home. The Levesques' home, naturally, now features many pieces from NEST Modern.

The two families often have dinner together and cook at each other's houses. The Levesques often bring their 1-year-old son, René, over to swim in Allison and Packard's pool. "They're easygoing, great guys," Barbara Levesque says. In the morning, Allison will take Luna and Marley on a walk and chat with other neighbors. Just another day in Crestview.