

A photograph of a modern house with a light-colored polycarbonate wall and a dark roof. A concrete walkway leads to the entrance. The house is surrounded by greenery and a wooden fence. The text "EXCLUSIVE + BUDGET BREAKDOWN" is overlaid at the top.

EXCLUSIVE + BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Budget Breakdown: A Color-Changing House in Dallas Is Built for \$584K

By Lauren Jones / Photos by Dror Baldinger –
May 5, 2020

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LED strips embedded in a polycarbonate wall allow one couple to change the mood of their new home.

"Every day is a staycation," says Lori Louis of the Scandinavian- and farmhouse-inspired home she shares with her partner, Jim, in East Dallas, Texas. Sitting in a primarily 1940s neighborhood, Trammel House affords access to hiking and bike trails for the pair of empty nesters, who'd lived in a historic home nearby for 26 years before deciding to move into a more modern, low-maintenance home that would allow them to age in place. For the task, they called on architect Thad Reeves of A. Gruppo Architects.

\$117,868.80 General Contractor & Overhead Fees	\$41,709.50 Exterior Improvements	\$47,862.35 Concrete
\$1,500 Masonry	\$12,094.78 Steel	\$38,648.31 Framing

\$41,600

Millwork

\$4,950

Trim

\$48,416.86

**Thermal &
Moisture**

\$25,953.99

Doors

\$23,832.49

Windows

\$55,916.40

Finishes

\$6,314.95

Flooring

\$13,103.75

Countertops

\$7,368

**Specialties &
Hardware**

\$23,325.99

Plumbing

\$11,996

HVAC

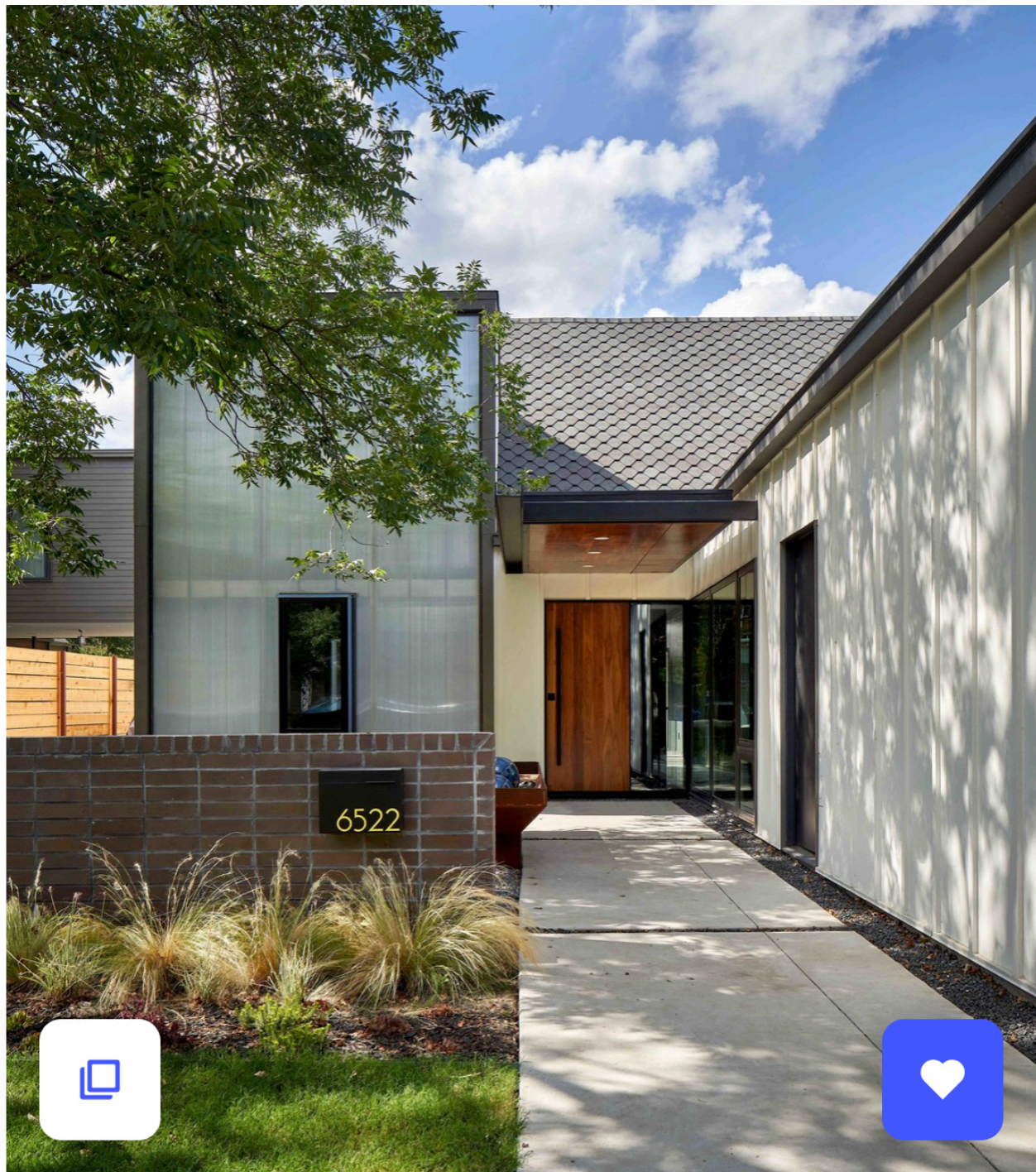
\$36,209.92

Electrical

\$25,033.59

Contingency

Grand Total: \$583,705.38

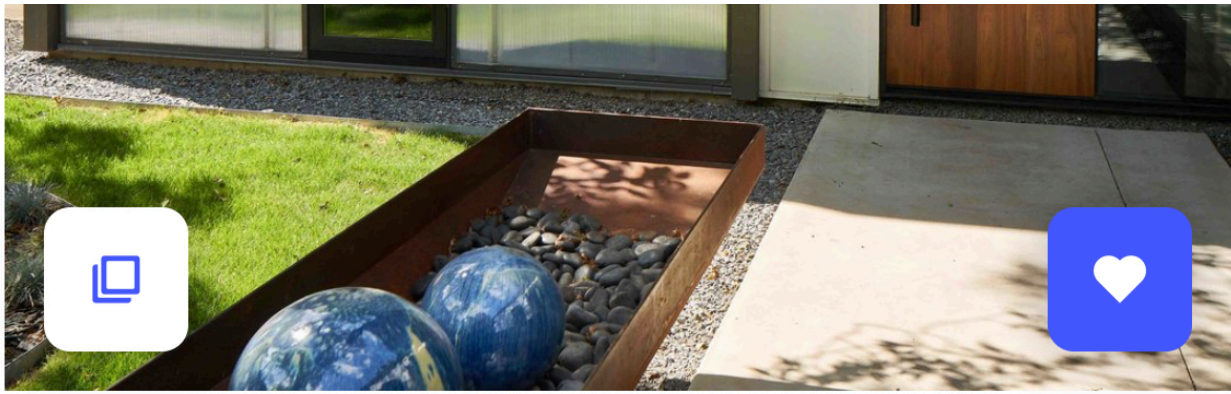


Jim and Lori Louis's three-bed, two-bath home in East Dallas came to life because of a unique partnership between the couple and A. Gruppo Architects. "They really listened to our goals, embraced our aesthetic, and honored our budget," says Lori.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

"It was a highly collaborative effort," Reeves remarks. The couple have backgrounds in architecture and real estate, and were excited to be involved with the entire process.





One facade features Polygal, a polycarbonate sheet first manufactured in 1970 and now available in various layers, colors, and degrees of transparency. The Polygal used for Trammel House has LED light strips inside, which the Louises play with for holidays and parties.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

Photo Categories: exterior, house building type, concrete siding material, shingles roof material, gable roofline

While Jim and Lori originally sought to build two spec homes as a real estate investment, they later sold the second lot to their best friends and asked for a redesign of what the architects had developed for the first spec project—a large, two-story dwelling. "With two stories, you save on roofing and foundation,"

Reeves says. "When they came back, they wanted it to be a smaller one-story with a connection to the outdoors."

The resulting 2,600-square-foot home strikes all the right notes. "It's clean and straightforward on the outside, but has layers of complexity and a simple elegance inside," says Lori.





"As far as our visitors go, most of them are really intrigued and impressed by the rotating television that separates the living area from the kitchen and allows us to watch wherever we are spending our time," says Lori. "This was one of those ideas that A. Gruppo just ran with and figured out after a brainstorming session one afternoon."

Photo: Dror Baldinger

The architects referenced the modern farmhouse aesthetic, but created "a few moments that obviously break the mold," says Reeves. On the exterior, diamond-shaped asphalt shingles are a nod to a traditional, agricultural vernacular, bordering cement board-and-batten siding and a Polygal light system.

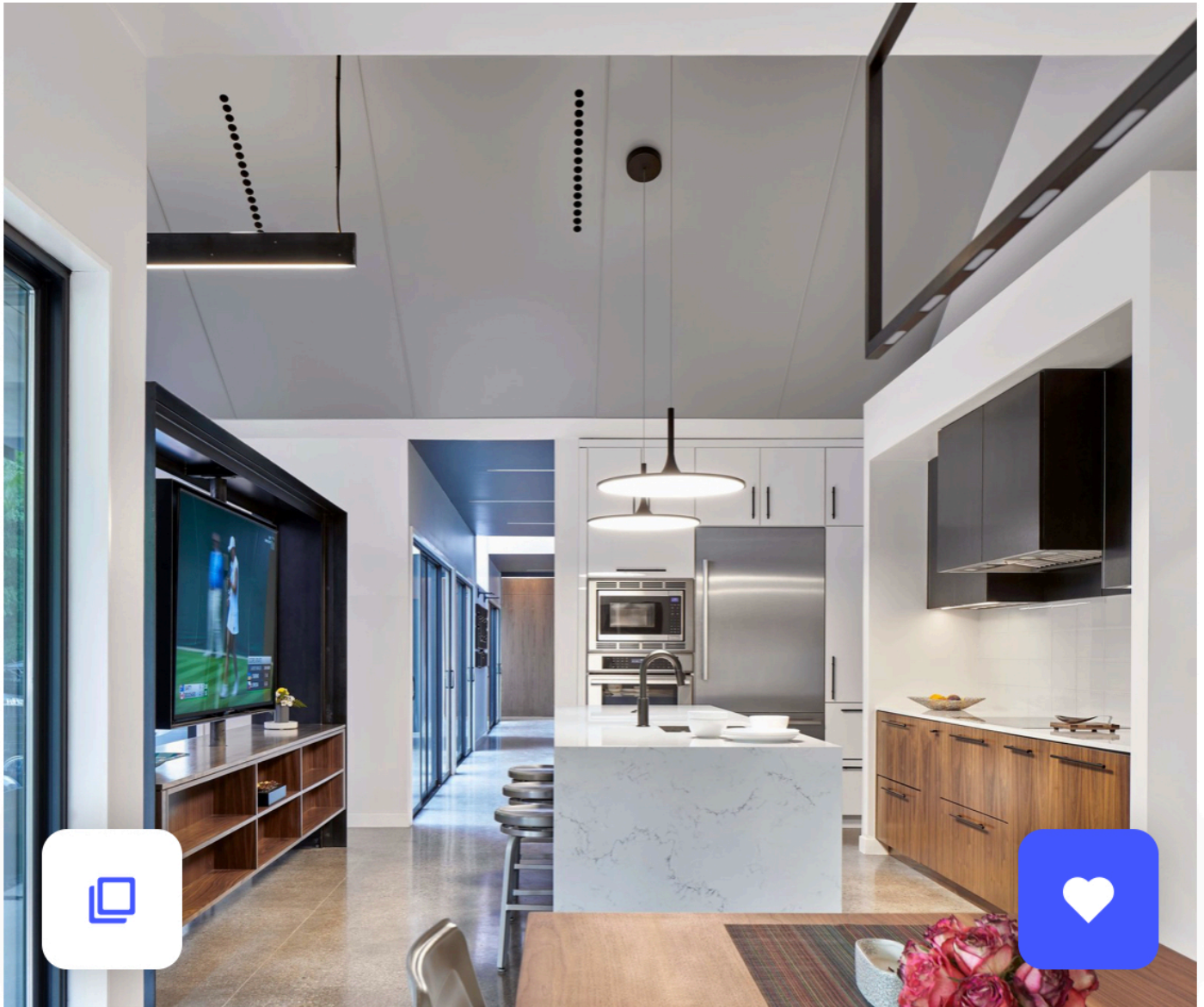
"The light system is something we have used before, as natural light is a big part of our work," Reeves says. The polycarbonate sheets, developed in the 1970s, has become more available over the last 25 years, and can be used instead of windows in certain locations. Jim was particularly excited about placing LED light strips in the sheets, which allows the whole wall to change color.



In the daytime, the Polygal system pulls in soft, natural light, while at night there are a rainbow of options. "It has a beautiful quality of natural light during the day—plus it manages UV rays and privacy, and controls glare," says Lori.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

Thoughtful—and sometimes surprising—detailing continues inside. "Someone who worked with us describes the house as a car you see on the highway that looks like a regular sedan, but there's a hot rod under the hood," Reeves says. "I think that's a pretty good description."



The homeowners love the flow of the kitchen, dining room, living room, and butler's pantry—so much so that they've already had more parties since moving in than they did in 26 years at their prior residence.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

Dramatic, pitched ceilings in the main living space are traversed by a nearly 26-foot-long, handcrafted light fixture. "The ceiling, which is made of NDF panels, is such a dominant feature that we needed something to elevate it," explains Reeves. To avoid penetrating the ceiling and having to spend thousands of dollars on such a large fixture, John Beck, the project's construction supervisor, had the idea to use engineering lumber and aluminum with off-the-shelf LED tracks.

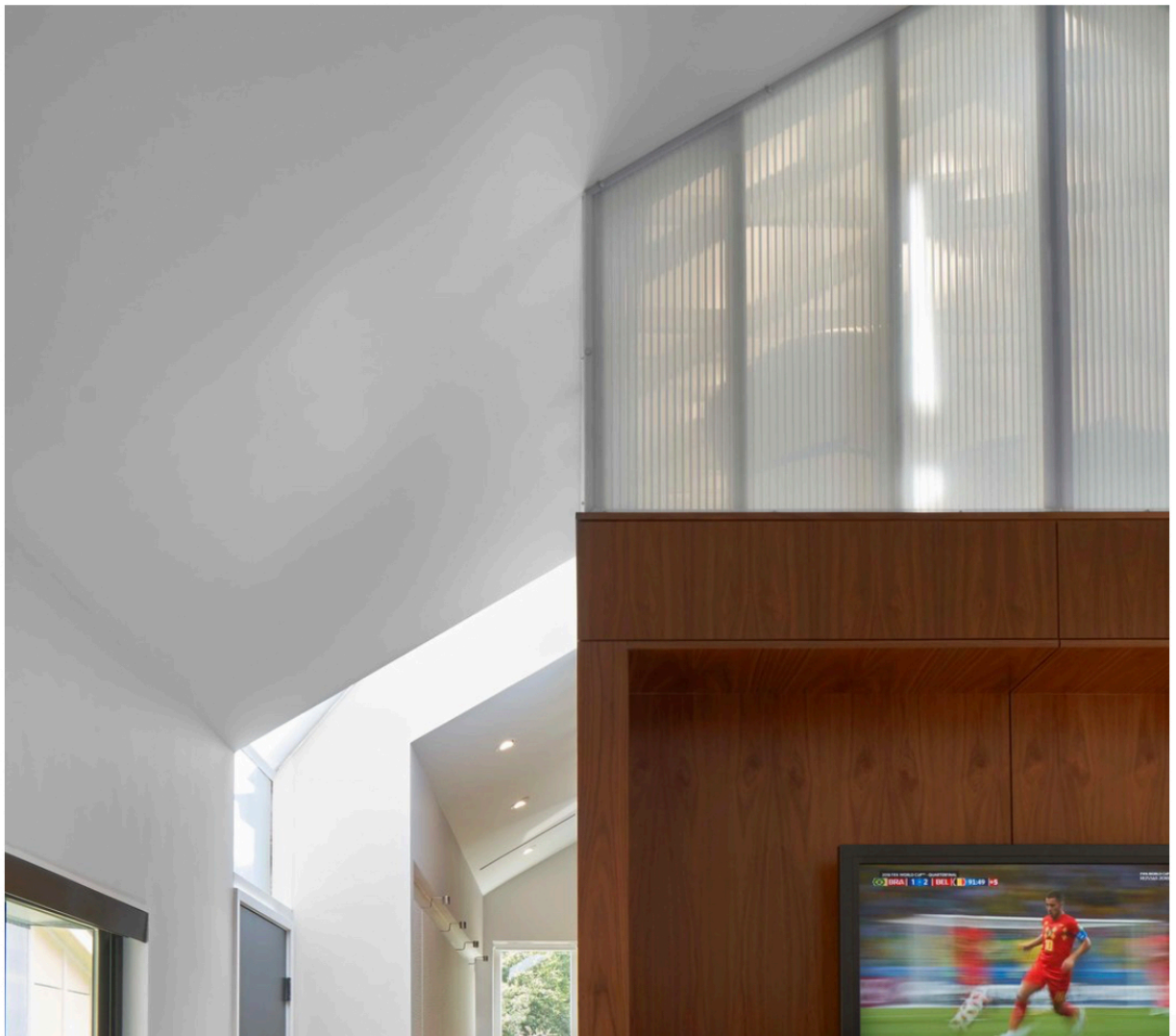
The kitchen, separated from living room by a rotating TV, features sleek walnut cabinetry. The wood continues into the dining room, which has a built-in credenza. "Jim and Lori found the dining room table on close-out," Reeves says. "It was perfect because of its walnut top and steel legs, and it looked like the rest of the finishes in the house."



A jack-and-jill bathroom, children's bedrooms, powder room, and laundry room are in the space before the master suite, which includes a hallway with a polycarbonate light monitor.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

Leading away from the public areas, a long hallway has large sliding glass doors on one side, opening up to the exterior courtyard. Reeves used the same LED tracks from the living room to rethink the lighting in the hallway. The hall's dark palette "contrasts with the rest of the house, drawing you into a pool of light into the master beyond," says Reeves.





The master suite, a box within a box, includes a walnut feature topped with another Polygal panel.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

Photo Categories: bedroom, night stands, concrete floors, bed, storage, ceiling lighting

The master bedroom, which is more of a wing, is airy and open with a home office and his-and-hers closets.

"We wanted to avoid making a master suite that was a series of rooms," Reeves says. "It

truly has a resort feel and allows us to retreat and recharge," says Lori. The steam shower and television, which is cleverly hidden with the master bathroom mirror, are just some of the indulgences.



Easy living was one of the homeowners' main goals, and thanks to the work of A. Gruppo, they now have a home they can be happy in for a long time to come.

Photo: Dror Baldinger

Project Credits:

Architect of Record: Thad Reeves- A. Gruppo Architects
@a_gruppo_architects

Builder/General Contractor: Thad Reeves - A.
Gruppo Architects

Structural Engineer: Childress Engineering

Landscape Design: A. Gruppo Architects

Interior Design: A. Gruppo Architects

Lighting Designer: A. Gruppo Architects

