



The site was an undeveloped one acre lot in north central Austin with gently sloping terrain down to Shoal Creek bordering the western edge. The property was never built upon as it was previously part of an estate with a historic home that utilized 2 of 3 adjoining lots, leaving this property as a park-like side yard.

The property was filled with large old growth trees spread throughout. Seven trees have the 'protected' designation from the City of Austin including three that have the stricter

'Heritage' status imposing even more stringent restrictions. The majestic trees made the site desirable but also challenging to find an acceptable placement for any new structures. There were multiple meetings with the city arborist to figure out an approach that allowed development while keeping every single protected tree intact. The spread out nature of the existing trees had a clear impact on the design resulting in a long linear plan weaving its footprint among the existing trees.

The designer exceeded all requirements in accounting for the CRZs (Critical Root Zones) of protected trees. Once approved, the City Arborist cited the project as an example of how a project can successfully find a way to allow construction and protect the cherished trees of the city at the same time.

The house is the home for the designer and partner. It was a surprise to the designer how tough it was to get started on the design – a major case of writer's block ensued. Designing



a home for oneself proved to be a daunting task. The fact that as a designer, you are aware of so many options for design directions, materials etc. created a design paralysis and this crisis of confidence and the desire for something great fostered too many divergent ideas and a lot of uncertainty. The designer also found himself thinking the design should be more avant-garde, more creative, more bold etc. – all in an attempt to create some noteworthy, cutting-edge design. After several months of overblown schemes that just didn't seem correct, that seemed somehow forced to be something overtly dramatic, the designer one day took a look at some of the artwork and collectibles around his current home and realized he had been deliberately avoiding the classic house shape one might see in a child's drawing of a 'home' and one he loved and collected without hesitation.

There was a fear that this shape was cliché and overdone, how could it possibly be the right direction? But after some simple sketches it was clear the genesis of the entire design scheme could be built on taking this classic form and extruding it through the site and then cutting out sections to make courtyards that responded to the trees etc. The designer also reminded himself to revisit what he loved about his favorite building, the Kimbell Museum - how the use of simple, powerful forms, carefully defined proportions, evocative honest materials, intelligent use of rhythm and small courtyards to connect interior to exteriors are more impactful than wild, attention-grabbing design moves. The stalled design process quickly took off and the final floor plan and primary volumes were developed fairly quickly.