

A MODERN COLLABORATION

By Claudia Alarcon | Photography by Andrea Calo



After a long and frustrating search for a new home that had taken them all over Austin for weeks, a garage door changed John Allison's and Tim Packard's fortunes. The handcrafted mahogany door with stainless steel inlays attracted them to a modern house on Piedmont Avenue, in the heart of the Crestview neighborhood.





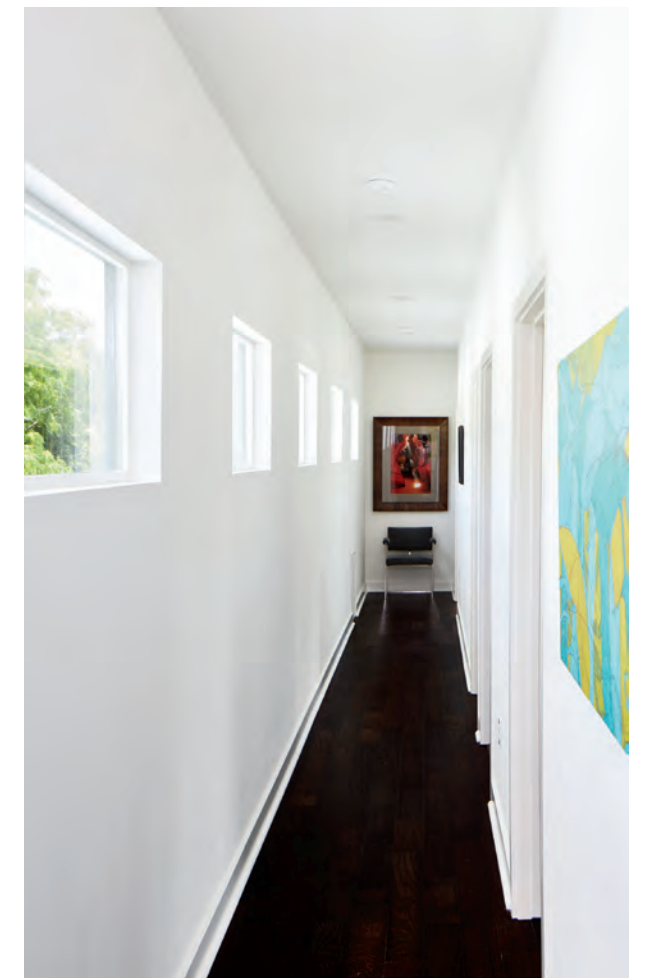
Local builder Dominique Levesque and his wife and business partner Barbara have lived in the area for more than 20 years. Once a working class neighborhood of modest homes built in the 1930s, Crestview is now a coveted, trending neighborhood with a wide range of residents and architectural styles. Their company, Dominique Levesque Construction, has built and remodeled over 40 houses here, embracing a philosophy that makes them fun to design and build, as well as accessible to more people.

Designed by architect Nathan Winchester, the house that

Allison and Packard found is a 3,000-square-foot, four-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath open plan concept that is both modern and livable. Allison is co-owner of NEST Modern, an Austin furniture and design showroom, and Packard works in sales for a large national homebuilder, so they have unique insights and knowledge of the residential market. Winchester and Levesque have been good friends for many years and have collaborated on a number of builds over the last 15 years, both on custom homes and spec projects such as this one. This project originated from the beginnings of a custom design they were working on, but the owners bought the house during the process.

“Nathan has partnered with us on many of our projects,” says Barbara Levesque. “He was a natural choice, since we all work well together. Dom and Nathan integrate their strengths, opinions and ideas from the very start of the process. Nathan comes up with some initial sketches, and then they discuss floor plans, functionality, building materials and best building practices for the particular style they’re trying to achieve. Dom especially has a hand in choosing materials and the finishes. He makes those decisions in the field as the project progresses — like plumbing fixtures, appliances, sinks, flooring, tile, etc. That kind of process can work when you’re building on spec and not for a specific client.”

“Dom and I have worked on a few dozen projects together. We knew we were off to a good start with this one and we decided to transfer these initial concepts to a spec house,” says Winchester. “Like most projects in central Austin, working with the existing trees and thin lots is typical. The simple and elongated forms blended easily with narrow lot lines, and the existing ash trees in front are a nice organic contrast to the smooth white stucco and simple geometry. The white stucco of the main shape was contrasted by slick, darker metal-clad supporting forms to the sides. A recession in the front left corner of the stucco element became an infill of mahogany and glass, and a focal point of the design.” Simple



rectangular shapes define living spaces and when viewed from the street, the largest form on the site comprises the living, dining and kitchen rooms in a lineal arrangement on the first floor.

“Besides the garage door, we loved the design of the home with its bold façade,” says Allison. “Also the simple floor plan with the kitchen open to the living room, and the master bedroom in the back with no upstairs [rooms] above it.” The smart floor plan was designed for privacy and comfort, with a floor level master suite to the rear off the main living space. The guest bedrooms are accessed through a stairway in the double-height front vestibule, which acts as a front porch enclosed

by glass with views to the street. The landing serves as a small lounge or work area for guests.

“The home was completed when we bought it, but we worked with Dom and Barbara to add kitchen tile and landscaping upgrades,” says Allison. “We also added a few of our own upgrades by changing lighting, fans and cabinet hardware.”

The couple also added a pool and deck to accommodate their love for entertaining as part of an outdoor living area that is soon to be complete with outdoor kitchen and shower. The neighborhood’s established trees provide shade and privacy, enhanced by umbrellas that are secured directly into the deck. The Levesques worked on the landscape in the front and back

yards, and some of the finish out in the patio area. This inviting space becomes the heart of the home in the summertime. To keep it cool and energy efficient, the home is insulated with spray foam insulation and has a high efficiency HVAC system and a steel roof.

Inside, the space is bright and sunlit, which accents the oak flooring and mahogany cabinets in the kitchen and baths. Details like small built-in shelves turn corners and nooks into functional spaces, adding interest and housing the couple’s many interesting objects and artworks. “All the furnishings in the home are from NEST Modern, along with some vintage and family pieces,” says Allison. “I guess my

[interior design] process comes from my passion for good Italian design mixed with mid-Century pieces and love for collecting original art. I also focus on comfort and fabrics and finishes that will hold up to family, friends and two dogs. Some of my favorite pieces are the Good Egg chair by Milo Baughman in the master, a reclaimed four hundred year old slab of cypress coffee table in the living room and the *Dance of the Dragons* painting by Sandy Whitby in the dining room.” Functional details include a storage bench in the mudroom adjacent to the garage and utility room, as well as storage for the belongings of the couple’s canine companions, Luna and Marley.



The Levesques also had a hand in that special garage door. It was handcrafted by Hill Country Doors & Woodworks, a company that Dominique owns that creates artisan quality, solid wood and steel doors to be incorporated into his projects (and those of others). The door added not only functionality but also the distinctive style that ultimately sold the home. ♦

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