

/// SMART BUILDING STARTS HERE ///

THE MAGAZINE
OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF HOME BUILDERS

Builder

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DESIGN** /// P.84

Award- Winning Houses

**Smart land use, great
details, high efficiency**

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PAY DIRT

This year, for the first time, the Builder's Choice Awards merged with the Custom Home Design Awards. Competition was fierce and deliberations were lengthy. Here are this year's jury selections: the cutting-edge and inspired examples of smart land strategies, high-performance building, thoughtful planning, good environmental stewardship, and successful indoor-outdoor flow. For expanded coverage of the Builder's Choice and Custom Home Design Awards, visit builderonline.com and customhomeonline.com. BY CHERYL WEBER, LEED AP, JENNIFER GOODMAN, AND AMY ALBERT



Casey Dunn



ON SITE The houses had to sit low to preserve the view from the developer's uphill lot. Expansive clay soils made the slope unstable, and the proposed sunken houses too expensive an undertaking. Instead, basement

square footage was transferred to smaller second floors, and the first floor was lowered as much as geotechnical limits allowed through the use of 4-foot voided

retaining walls on drilled piers. The conditioned crawlspace used sheet waterproofing over soil retainers on the uphill side, with the vapor barrier fastened to a frame wall on the downslope. Frame walls

were supported on steel beams spanning between columns, with welded 'knife edge' steel plates that closed the gap between the structure and the expansive soil.



PROJECT OF THE YEAR

Parkside Residences, Austin, Texas

// *New life for a tough site* //

Architecture and construction are fields where creative problem-solving can pay off big on issues such as affordability and suburban sprawl. Our judges elevated the Parkside Residences to Project of the Year, not just because the three spec homes are beautifully designed and efficiently built, but because they also make ingenious use of what once was a single lot on an overlooked commercial strip.

The design team (Kevin Alter, Ernesto Cragolino, and Tim Whitehill) overcame several construction challenges, including an unstable 60-foot slope. Their client was the woman next door, who asked them to help her buy, subdivide, and build on the lot. “It didn’t make sense for a typical developer because of the huge cost of foundations and working out access for driveways,” Alter says. “It was about doing something she could feel good about, that wouldn’t spoil her view of downtown Austin.”

The acre plot sits between a single-family neighborhood and commercial properties along a boulevard farther down the hill, and the new flag-lot subdivision is accessed from the commercial street. For economy, the buildings were mostly stick-framed and share a similar material palette. Each stucco-and-cypress-clad home has a green roof that blends into the thick underbrush when viewed from higher on the hillside.

It’s one thing to design a modernist pavilion in the woods, but quite another to do it in a dense urban setting. Alterstudio deftly balanced openness and privacy by fitting each living area and master bedroom with a wall of glass that connects to discrete outdoor space, and with roof planes that carry out past the glass. Select gestures such as richly grained walnut cabinetry and exterior wood screens enliven an otherwise modest composition. “It’s like wearing a beautiful tie with a straightforward suit, and is a counter-argument to the prevailing trend in modern work,” Alter says. “Rather than fetishizing the building, we like to use things with an inherently complex character.”

The judges praised the more-with-less approach, striking indoor-outdoor relationships, and connection to the city. “It puts outdoor spaces on a podium and celebrates them,” a judge said. Others applauded the project’s “affordably constructed resort ambience” and the “compact design in a transitional neighborhood.” — C.W.

CATEGORY Production, Semi-Custom, or Spec, Less Than 3,000 Square Feet

ENTRANT/ARCHITECT
Alterstudio Architects, Austin, Texas

BUILDER Risher Martin Fine Homes, Austin

SITE 0.33 acre

LIVING SPACE 2,300 to 2,700 square feet

SALES PRICE \$560,000 to \$588,000

CONSTRUCTION COST \$215 to \$250 per square foot

PHOTOGRAPHER Casey Dunn