

AUSTIN HOME

Austin & The Hill Country

GOING NATIVE
Meet Austin's
Plant Boss
BACHELOR'S PAD
The Coolest
Front Yard
In Town

SPRING 2019 US \$4.95

9 1 >

0 74820 27345 6

Entertainment Center

A MODERN HOME
IN TARRYTOWN
SERVES AS
THE ULTIMATE
GATHERING
SPOT FOR A
BACHELOR AND
HIS FRIENDS

E

Every night, while driving to his Tarrytown home from his downtown office, Austin Smithers becomes transfixed at the intersection of Windsor and Pecos. There, on the southeast corner, a modern home with contemporary lines and a handsome exterior sits tucked amongst a batch of trees. When the interior lights are on, passersby can get a small glimpse of the world inside—not enough to be meaningful but just enough to leave one wanting for more.

It is this house that makes Smithers stop.

“When I see the house lit up at night,” he says, “I think, This house is pretty sweet.”

Smithers should know. The home is his.

Built on a busy corner in Tarrytown, the house has everything that the Smithers, a 46-year-old bachelor, needs for his entertaining and sports-watching lifestyle: an open floor plan, an abundance of natural light and a to-die-for front yard and pool. As a result, the home has become Grand Central Station for Longhorns football game-watching parties, pool parties for the owner’s friends and their kids and holiday get-togethers among family members.

A native Austinite who attended O. Henry Middle School, Austin High School and the University of Texas, Smithers was living in a 1930s house in Tarrytown in 2014 when he grew tired of “creatures running around the walls” and decided it was time for him to build a new, modern home. After searching six months for the perfect lot, he found it two blocks from his house at the corner of Windsor and Pecos. He liked the location of the lot—it was convenient to both his office and to Zilker Park and Barton Springs, where he often takes his two white labradors, Slaid and Hays. But he especially liked that the lot featured several heritage and protected trees.

“I thought the trees could make for a pretty cool house,” he recalls. Smithers was sold.

He then enlisted the father of modern residential architecture in Austin, Dick Clark, and his firm to design the home. Clark and his team, which included Kate Blocker and Kris White, drew up a house that would use the same horseshoe shape of the existing house on the lot—the 1950s home was torn down in the process—allowing them to shoehorn the new structure deep within the trees. (Blocker and White say that this



If Smithers’ front yard isn’t the best in Austin, it’s on a very short list.

Smithers (opposite top) has multiple outdoor spaces, including a courtyard; a “pop-up” (opposite bottom) gives the living room a grand feel; the dining table (left) can be converted into a Ping Pong table; several trees dot the corner lot.



project was one of the last ones that Clark saw through completion before his death in August 2017.)

Smithers’ desire for a pool posed another problem. Because the back yard lacked adequate room for a pool, the design team located it in the front yard. But even that didn’t provide enough space. The answer? The architects pushed one side of the pool partially underneath the house, specifically a bank of cantilevered windows.

“The pool going underneath that cantilevered element really became the idea that elevates the design,” Blocker says.

Much like the initial drop on a wooden roller coaster, the first step onto the Smithers property is a jaw-dropping experience. Upon entering the front gate, guests are greeted by the blue water of the pool below. Immediately to the left is an artificial turf area that features lounge chairs, perfect for taking in some afternoon sun.

Concrete pavers lead to the main outdoor sitting area, which features a big-screen television, a Big Green Egg ceramic grill, a traditional gas grill and contemporary outdoor furniture. It is here where Smithers reads the newspaper, listens to music (he has installed outdoor speakers) and watches sports with friends, weather permitting.

“It’s the perfect place for getting together with my friends to watch football,” he says. “I’ve got the TV outside. I’ve got the grill. And in the summer, my friends come over with their kids all of the time.”

For a frontyard space that has the traditional features of a back yard, privacy is important. A board-form concrete wall and a fence designed by landscape architecture firm Westshop to allow passersby a small peek give the outdoor oasis privacy without completely isolating it from the street.

If Smithers’ front yard isn’t the best in Austin, it’s on a very short list.

The modern aesthetic continues on the interior. The 2,800-square-foot, three-bedroom home, which was built by RisherMartin Fine Homes, features light colors and natural materials, such as white oak floors. Smithers says he spends about 95 percent of his time in the open kitchen-living-dining area, which receives ample sunlight from super-size windows. A “pop-up” feature above the living room also provides natural light and helps give the space a grand feeling. Windows both on the first and second levels have been strategically placed to best frame the views of the trees.

Furniture consists mostly of midcentury classics, such as an Eames lounge chair. In the dining area, a concrete table designed by James De Wulf does double duty as a dining table and a Ping Pong table.

“Austin may do a little bit of formal dining there,” Blocker says, “but more than likely, he’s going to be playing Ping Pong.”

Since the front yard has become the back yard, the back yard has become a courtyard. There, a deck and built-in bench, both made from garapa wood, sit in the shadow of a Live Oak tree. The Clark team designed a circular cutout in the deck to incorporate the tree into the design.

“We put a lot of effort to make sure that this tree was this spectacular piece,” White says.

A window wall separates the courtyard and the open kitchen-living-dining area.

“The cool thing about the house is that the outdoor area, especially the courtyard, flows into the indoor area because of all of the glass,” Smithers says. “So you could have people out there, and it feels like they are in the house.”

Indeed, whether observing the house from the inside or the outside, the home on Windsor and Pecos looks pretty sweet. 🏡



The architects went to great lengths to save the tree that covers the courtyard (opposite left); Marfa-themed artwork (opposite right) hangs throughout the house; Westshop’s minimal and low-maintenance plantings (above) complement the modern lines of the home; the kitchen features a glass “backsplash” (right) that allows Smithers to see the traffic and passersby on Pecos; a board-form concrete wall helps give privacy to the frontyard space.



“You could have people [in the courtyard], and it feels like they are in the house,” Smithers says.

