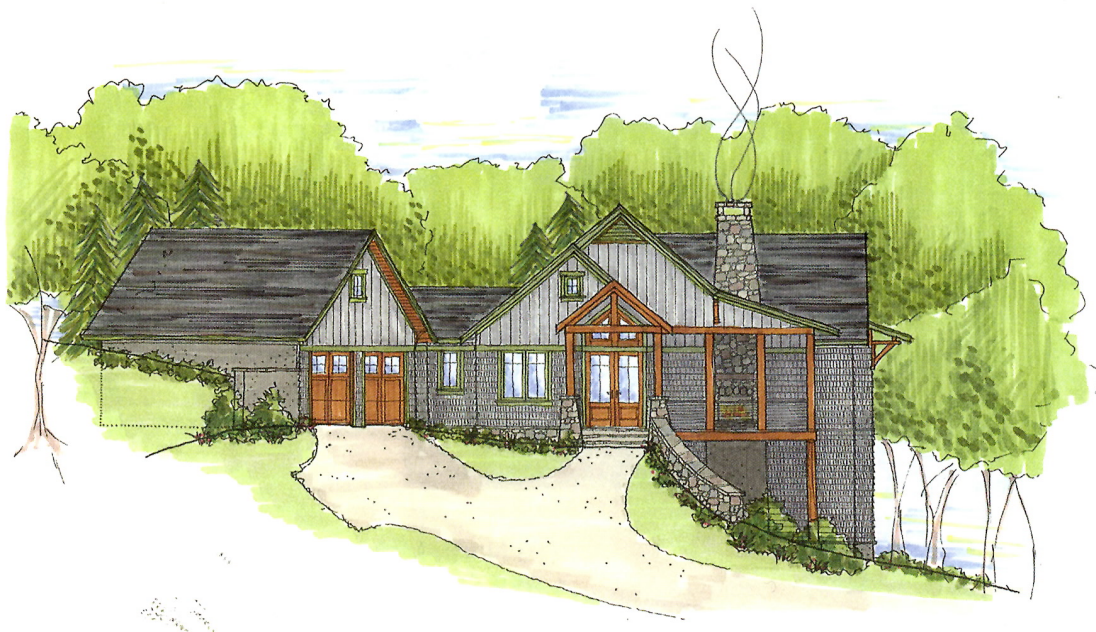


That's Their Motivation



Proposed Front Elevation (North)

ACM DESIGN



Theatrical touches enliven the practical needs of high-elevation project

By Melanie McGee Bianchi
Photo by Tim Robison

Notions of “making or breaking” a home can get dramatic, even when it comes to such subjective elements as lighting, roof style, or number of covered patios. But when a house is situated at a forested 4,300 feet, calculating wind load — i.e., exactly how much of that natural force a high-elevation structure can reliably handle — comes before any style decisions, inside or out.

Amy Conner-Murphy’s firm, ACM Design, is building a mountain dream home for Ken and Beth Brody, a Raleigh-based couple with three grown children: Rachel, 28; Elliot, 24; and Leo, 20. Slated for completion next fall, the 3,800-square-foot

house is part of the Ascot Club at Highland Forest and will be the Brodys’ primary residence. Located in Waynesville, Ascot Club is the highest gated community east of the Rockies.

“The slope is challenging,” admits Conner-Murphy, an architect and interior designer. A long, relatively shallow footprint, concomitant with the steep grade, informs the entire home’s look and feel. Building the Waynesville Retreat, as it’s been titled during its construction phase, is all about “managing the structural requirements of the [house] while balancing that with the aesthetic concerns,” she explains. “There are a lot of puzzle pieces to fit together.”

None of this studied ingenuity is apparent from the home’s exterior, however, which exhibits a mellow dignity. The basic style is Appalachian modern with hearty masculine details: steep gables, charcoal shake siding, and windows trimmed in moss green. Strong mountain accents show up in a timbered entrance and a stone chimney and retaining wall.

The architectural interior, too, is “relatively quiet,” according to Conner-Murphy, who talks about “spare trim and calm coloration ... a cooler undertone mixed with wood tones.” For example, in one bathroom, there will be a live-edge walnut countertop (where natural, rough lines trump rehearsed sleekness) with a granite



THE SLOPE'S THE THING
Ascot Club, where architect Amy Conner-Murphy (pictured) designed a home for Ken and Beth Brody, is the highest gated community east of the Rockies.

place' layout" (the term refers to one-level floor plans that can extend the independence of retirees). Downstairs, though, the kids can visit in ultimate comfort, inhabiting a separate living area and kitchenette in addition to bedrooms, and even, says Brody, "an exercise room — all the amenities of a well-appointed inn."

vessel sink. Granite is slated for the kitchen, too — not the expected dusky shade, this time, but bright, upscale-cottage Alaska White.

All the understatedness bows to the full majesty of the long-range mountain scenery. The view's the thing, and properly situated picture windows take full advantage of the Pisgah National Forest panorama. The 1,000 square feet of multi-level outdoor living space, almost a third the size of the indoors, includes a fireplace and a hot tub.

Conner-Murphy emphasizes her creation of an interior flow that makes the mountain vista visible from almost every point in the house. "The rooms are designed in an open-plan format to allow the views to be seen with the adjacent room in the foreground," she explains. "That means one can stand at the kitchen island, which is aligned with the great room, and see through the great room into a large bank of windows and directly to the view."

All other drama is in the details: a sky-high ceiling at the entryway, a descending wooden staircase with a trendy cable-rail

baluster, and specialty lighting fixtures designed to highlight numerous pieces of artwork. Conner-Murphy says she's thrilled that the woman of the house has an artistic eye: "Beth has a very strong understanding of her own style. It's terrific to work with someone who's willing to do something a little different."

The way people furnish their homes, she notes, depends on whether they're moving all their belongings from one residence to another, or starting fresh. "This home is a blank canvas," she says, "and that's been a real gift."

Long active in dance and theater, homeowner Beth Brody says she has been drawn to unique people and surroundings all her life: "As a creative person, I enjoy the process of designing a home with Amy and having the opportunity to make style choices."

She's not immune to practical innovations, though, and mentions what will be her own large "cook's kitchen," and the way the main floor of the house "will live like a ranch, with an 'age-in-

Grandparents haven't been forgotten, either. "We are fortunate to have all of our parents still living," says Brody. "We are installing an elevator so that they, too, can visit, and be able to enjoy the house without the worry of stairs."

As for what works of art will justify the meticulously placed boutique lighting, Brody hasn't made her final choices yet. But she mentions pieces from the couple's many travels, as well as local art: "Ken has his eye on a beautiful slab of granite he would like to hang in our stairwell," she reveals.

"Of course," she adds, "our most precious artwork are the pieces our children painted or drew when they were young. There will be a lot of family memorabilia gracing the walls."

"With the natural beauty of the mountains right outside every window," she says, "we will never be without something to catch our eye."

Learn more about ACM Design, visit acmdesignarchitects.com.