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Ruggedly refined

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The top level of the house contains the master bedroom and bathroom, which are separated by sliding frosted-glass doors. Furniture on this floor remains low to provide unimpeded views through the windows.

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BY ANNE M.P. SEELEY - CORRESPONDENT


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The Treehouse nestles into the hillside in a Black Mountain development. Cheshire, designed by Duany PlatterZyberk, reflects the growing new urbanist movement that integrates housing with shops and restaurants to create a small village. The home has an Arts and Crafts exterior that integrates with surrounding homes but maintains its identity with multiple windows and minimal ornamentation.


Owners Jenny and Ricky Graham hired architect Thomas Lawton and contractor Todd Bolyard of Citiline Resortline Development and Construction to help rework the home's floor plan. Jenny Graham, an interior designer, also worked with Lawton and Bolyard. The final design juxtaposes a rugged exterior with a modern interior.

The simple forms of the exterior yield to clean modern lines and colors inside. A rich palette of sage green walls, honeyed wood floors and lime green and orange accents bring life to the open plan. At 1,200 square feet, the need for open space became a driving force of the design. Lawton's goal was to make the house "feel and live larger than it was," so he emphasized light and views, put windows on all of the walls and reduced storage areas and doors. "The windows help break down the barrier of the wall," Lawton said.

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The lower level, which the Grahams use for a pool and game room, opens to a small patio. The living areas are at the center of the house, and the master bedroom and bath occupy the upper floor. An exterior room attached to each level extends the living space beyond the interior. The stair that connects the three levels required the greatest coordination between owner, designer and contractor. Lawton described it as having skeletal qualities so that the light could filter through.

The design emphasizes craft and high-end materials. The floors are made of heart pine that was recovered from rivers in the South; they exude a warm glow. The light fixtures of brushed silver were special-ordered to fit the modernist aesthetic. The three bathrooms presented another chance for finer materials, including Venetian glass tiles and custom fixtures.

The attention to detail, open interior spaces and transparent walls create an inviting modern home.

Anne M.P. Seeley is a master of architecture candidate at N.C. State University's College of Design.

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