

RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 1, 2021

Natural
Collaborations



Bear Ridge Residence

BOERNE, TEXAS
LAKE | FLATO ARCHITECTS



From the outside, this gabled house is of a piece with the land and Cordillera Ranch, a resort community of traditional homes and preserved open space. On the inside, though, it feels like an elegant pitched tent. With its glass gable ends, open corners, and the dog trot that plays an active role in many of LakelFlato's Hill Country houses, the owners feel like they're outdoors, even when they're not.

Thirty miles northwest of San Antonio and just over an acre, their land faces east toward the Guadalupe River valley, on a spot where deer and other wildlife travel through. The architects and their clients chose to build this full-time residence just below a craggy bluff that exposes the grandeur of the topography. "At the northwest corner of the site is a cul de sac, and pie-shaped lots come off it," says project architect Rebecca Comeaux, AIA. "At the top of the site are oak trees, and we thought it was too pretty to flatten out with a big house. We wanted to build with the landscape and use the hill as a buffer to block the western sun and views to the cul de sac and close neighbors. This gave them a natural setting around their home."



The Texas climate lends itself to outdoor living for three of four seasons (summer is the nemesis), and this house for empty nesters takes full advantage. The courtyard plan places a solar-topped breezeway between the main house and guest wing, evoking LakelFlato's beloved porch houses.



If the dog trot or breezeway started as a humble place for humans and their dogs to catch cross breezes in hot southern climates, it has evolved as a gracious interstitial space, and one with many expressions. Here it acts not only as the formal entry point but poetically as a gateway to the rear landscape, with its spectacular views.

“We wanted to emphasize traditional craft and ways of doing things, and let the form be more modern.”

—Rebecca Comeaux, AIA

The house’s long, gabled roofline sits parallel to the ridge, and the 23-foot-deep breezeway bisects the garage and living spaces. A perpendicular guest wing off the garage forms the northern arm of the private rear courtyard, while the couple’s suite encloses it on the south.

Visitors engage with the land from the moment of arrival—another benefit of pushing the house partway down the hill. This allowed the owners and their guests to experience more of the bluff, “as if the house were a bench” on the side of a hill, Rebecca says. From the parking court, a stone path hugs the hill along the house’s upper side, where colorful wildflowers and staggered boulders enhance the scrubby native vegetation. These intimate vignettes contrast with the long view that appears at the breezeway. Beyond, a pathway leads down to a fire pit set among cedars. “If we had moved the house up on the ridge, we would have had more drop-off at the back of the house,” Rebecca says. “We wanted it as level as possible on the vista side to encourage people to go outside.”



This page: The resort community required a minimum roof pitch, which the firm deployed like an abstracted tent form. Overhangs provide welcome shading for expansive walls of glass, while open gables convey light through the spaces. Rebecca designed the hand-carved alabaster light fixture over the dining table. High on the kitchen wall, a window draws light into a loft sitting area.



This page: In the great room, dark-stained framing contrasts with honed limestone walls and terrazzo-like concrete floors. The specks of color in the floor come from the Medina river rock aggregate used in the pour. Ceilings are hemlock with a transparent white glaze to preserve the evenness of the finish.



Traditional Craft

The couple, who have two grown children and have lived all over the world, requested a sophisticated, net-zero house where they could enjoy the wildlife. That brief drove the design, as did the proximity of neighbors and restrictions specifying a minimum roof pitch. LakelFlato's design marries modernism with Cordillera Ranch's predominantly Texas Tuscan and Mediterranean architecture. "To meet the challenge of working in a more traditional community, we wanted to emphasize traditional craft and ways of doing things, and let the form be more modern," Rebecca says.

Beneath the pitched metal roof, Lueders limestone walls and exposed, double Douglas fir trusses are deployed in a way that creates opportunities for large expanses of glass. The dark-stained framing forms a continuous span between the garage, breezeway, and living space, which contains a seating area, dining room, kitchen, and office. On the breezeway roof, translucent solar panels let light into this enigmatic place. In fact, you can see them from the living room's glass gable end. "The entry space is deep, so a full roof would have felt dark, and this felt like a great way to express net-zero," Rebecca says. "If we can create an opportunity to make it part of their everyday life and celebrate it, all the better."

Materials and connections also celebrate the everyday wildlife in this up-close slice of Texas. From the breakfast bump-out, the owners can watch animals approach. "They sent me quite a few videos of encounters

This page: Although primarily a one-story building, there are two loft spaces tucked into roof pop-ups, including this TV/sitting area over the kitchen. Uniform quartzite kitchen counters unite wood cabinetry of various hues.



This page: The owners' suite roughly parallels the guest wing on the other side of the house. Its glazed gable end pairs with floor-to-ceiling windows to bring in balanced natural lighting. The owners' bathroom lies between the bedroom and the wife's office.





This page: The husband's office occupies the terminus of the main volume. Its glazed gable lightens interiors but also lends a loftiness to the overall architecture. Deep overhangs shade the glazing from the southern sun. *Opposite page:* Set apart from the main house by the breezeway and garage, the guest wing is its own realm, complete with a raised deck that reaches into the view.

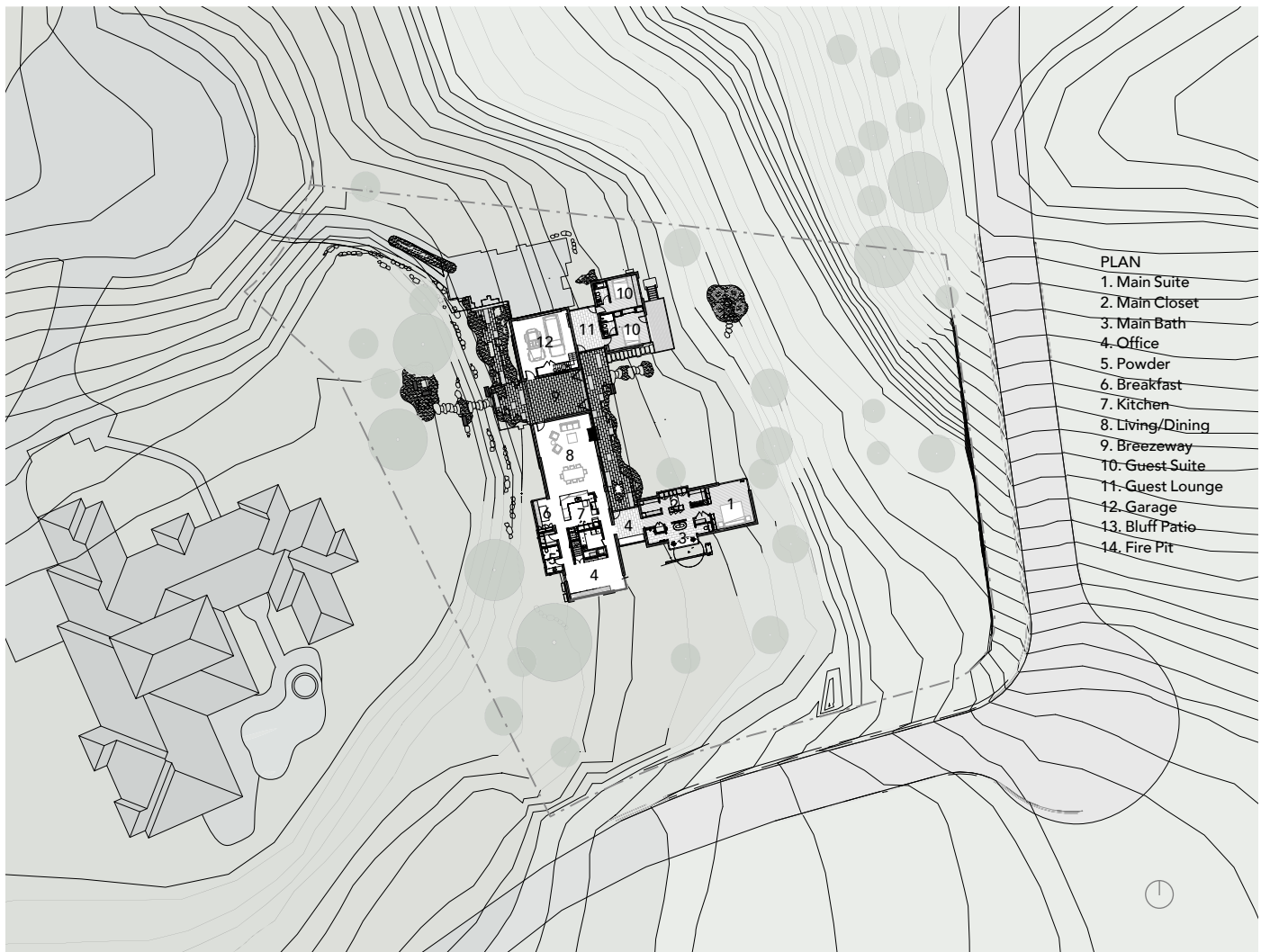
with birds and other wildlife,” Rebecca says. Glass links at the guest wing and primary bedroom wing allow the exterior stone to wrap inside, as though you are leaving one building and going to the next. This treatment also occurs in the kitchen and at the couple’s bath, where the wood siding slips inside. “It was a way for us to create a little bit of compression below those gables,” she says.

Indeed, the crafted interior finishes add another layer of structure and rigor. Walls are honed limestone; ceilings are hemlock with a transparent white glaze to preserve the natural color. Floors are a creamy, terrazzo-like ground concrete with flecks of brown, red, gold, and gray that comes from the Medina river rock aggregate used in the pour. Quartzite slabs bring refinement to the kitchen counters and tub and shower walls. “The builder was craft conscientious; he had very high standards and was willing to put in extra work to get things right,” Rebecca says.



In-Between

Cordillera Ranch touts its peaceful terrain of golf courses, trails, and connections to the river, and LakelFlato's felicitous design does those attributes ample justice. "From the living space you can see far to the Twin Sisters mountaintops; it's popular to be able to see them," Rebecca says. The offices also have a view. Hers is tucked into the glass threshold outside the main bedroom suite, and his is at the south end of the house, where light pours in through a clerestory gable, a glass corner, and a long, desk-level window that focuses the view.



Two roof pop-ups provide more private niches. The one above the garage carved out space for a small workshop. Another loft above the kitchen and laundry holds a TV/reading room, where a small window overlooks the husband's office and the rolling hills beyond.

And if a bedroom is a sanctuary, its suspension above grade enhances that sense. The land drops off under

"We wanted [the house] as level as possible on the vista side to encourage people to go outside."

—Rebecca Comeaux, AIA

the bedroom wings, and a floating porch outside the guest suite offers the pleasure of stepping outside to survey the world around it. Both bedrooms have a glass corner that opens them to the land, and cedar trees just outside the main bath provide complete privacy.

Texas vernacular architecture is always a reference point for LakeFlato's work, and the breezeway is but one manifestation of the inspiration and in-betweenness the architects breathe into their designs. Although it took some convincing for the community review board to approve it as a front door, the design prevailed. An 18-foot-long barn door on the entry side closes the space against wind and keeps animals out at night, while the backyard side has bifold doors. Mounted on sliding hardware, the slatted front door can be pulled across the living room for shade.

Opposite the entry, a path leads up to the ridge at the top of the lot, where small boulders provide a seated view of the sunset. "The owners like a peaceful, quiet, natural experience," Rebecca says, "and they feel like the house is a great place for that." —*Cheryl Weber*



Bear Ridge Residence

Boerne, Texas

ARCHITECT: Ted Flato, FAIA, principal -in-charge; Rebecca Comeaux, AIA, project architect, LakeFlato Architects, San Antonio, Texas

BUILDER: John Rubiola and Shane Valentine, Rubiola Construction Company, San Antonio

INTERIOR DESIGNER: Nicole Roberts, NR Interiors, San Antonio

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: David Beyer, Rialto Studio, San Antonio

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:

Scott Williamson, Austin, Texas

MECHANICAL ENGINEER: Kristof Irwin + Eric Griffen, Positive Energy, Austin

METAL FABRICATOR: Oliver Adamson, Citizen Build, San Antonio

STONE MASON: Mike Hunt, Curtis Hunt Restorations, Elmendorf, Texas

PROJECT SIZE: 4,436 square feet

SITE SIZE: 1.12 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Matthew Niemann, Dror Baldinger



KEY PRODUCTS

CLADDING: Roughback Lueders limestone, western red cedar, copper

COOKING APPLIANCES/VENTILATION: Wolf

COUNTERTOPS: Taj Mahal Quartzite

DECKING: Ipe

DISHWASHER: Asko

DOOR HARDWARE: Emtek, Baldwin

DOORS: Marvin

EXTERIOR STAINS: Cabot

FAUCETS: Hansgrohe, Dornbracht

GARAGE DOORS: Raynor

HUMIDITY CONTROL: Ultra-Aire

HVAC: Mitsubishi

INSULATION: Demilec

LIGHTING: WAC

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

MILLWORK: White oak/Aris Designs

PHOTOVOLTAICS: SunPower, Lumos Solar

RADIANT HEATING: Nuheat

RAIN SCREEN: Benjamin Obdyke Slicker Classic

REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER: Sub-Zero

SHEATHING: ZIP System

SHOWER ENCLOSURE: Krown Lab

SHOWER FAUCETS: Hansgrohe, Dornbracht

SINKS: Blanco, MTI, Ronbow

TOILETS: Duravit

TUB: MTI, Dornbracht

VENTILATION: Panasonic

WASHER/DRYER: LG

WINDOW SHADING: Lutron

WINDOW WALL SYSTEMS: LaCantina

WINDOWS: Marvin