

Retiring In Style



Custom Homes for

Whether or not retirement is around the corner, empty nesters want their homes to be ready for it. Accessibility and low maintenance are critical.

Susan Bady, Contributing Editor

The two homes featured here may not seem to have much in common, but their owners do. They're busy, active empty nesters who aren't retired yet — but when that day comes, a properly designed home will ease the transition.

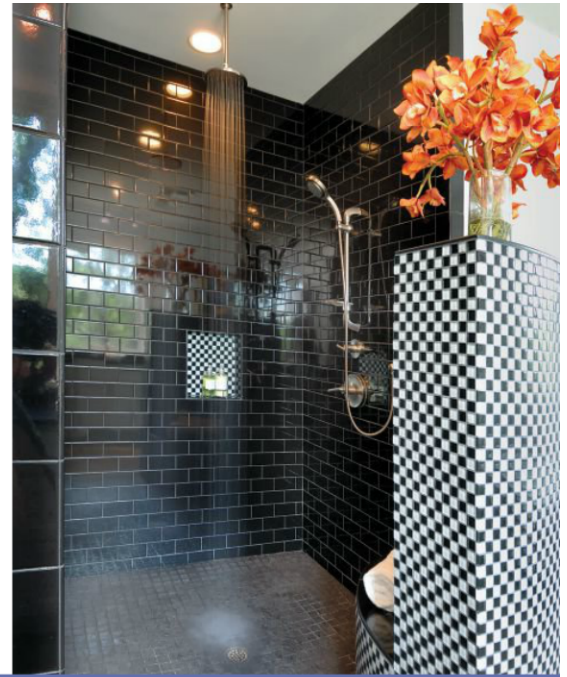
One couple built a home near a lake as a retreat for now and, in a few years, a full-time retirement residence. The other couple elected to minimize their home's footprint on a large rural site. When they're off the clock, they can kick back and relax without having to spend much time on maintenance.

Aging in place, obviously, is a big consideration for such clients. "We work mostly with empty nesters and believe it's very important to work universal design elements into a design," says architect Rick Burselson of Wimberley, Texas. He incorporates such features as wider doorways and hallways, curbless showers, step-free entrances, and low-maintenance exterior materials.



The kitchen features a 60-inch gas range and a separate refrigerator and freezer; open shelving; an island with counter seating; and a large window for cross ventilation. The soapstone countertops are dark gray, which sets them off against the white walls.

PHOTOS: ©DANIEL NADELBACH



the Not Quite Retired

Instead of the stone typically seen on central Texas homes, this residence features board-and-batten siding. Covered porches and long roof overhangs shade windows from the harsh afternoon sun. Inside, rough-sawn fir beams accentuate the vaulted ceilings and contrast with the mostly white interior (see kitchen image, opposite page). The board-and-batten wainscoting mimics the look of the siding, and the floors are stained concrete.

The shower in the master bath features a striking pattern of black, white, and clear tiles in various shapes and sizes. A bench is integrated into the pedestal wall, separating the shower from the rest of the room.

Texas with a twist

Grady Burnette builds a lot of houses in the central Texas town of Wimberley. Since many of his clients are empty nesters who are contemplating retirement, Burnette works with them and local architects, such as Burleson Design Group, to create homes that are accessible and easy to care for. Typically, the exteriors are rich with locally quarried stone, but this particular Wimberley home has board-and-batten, fiber-cement siding.

The site is approximately 6.7 acres and on top of a knoll. The clients' desire to save as many trees as possible made the builder's task a little more challenging. "We had some logistical issues in terms of getting equipment in and out and maneuvering around the site," says Burnette. Site work was confined to the footprint of the house, the swimming pool, and the road leading to the property. In order to keep all the living areas on one level, Burnette built a taller foundation under one side of the house.

Architect Rick Burleson and his colleague, David Costea, designed a 3,218-square-foot home, laid out in a U shape around a swimming pool. They oriented the living areas to the southeast to avoid drawing direct afternoon sun into the house. "The length

of the roof overhangs is important also," says Burleson. "We typically use 30-inch overhangs to provide a good level of shading."

With the pool as the centerpiece of the design, the architects created an inviting outdoor room with a summer kitchen. "Elongating the house, as opposed to designing a super boxy plan, provided more opportunities for windows, which, in turn, opened up the views from inside." The foyer, great room, and kitchen are in the center of the U. The master bedroom wing is on one end of the house and there are two home offices, plus a guest bedroom and bath, on the other.

The wife wanted the kitchen to be open to the great room — "sort of an alcove instead of a separate room, and she wanted a sizable pantry," says Burleson. A large window in the kitchen allows cross ventilation through the great room's sliding doors.

There's also a detached, three-bay carport with a storage room. "Most of the homes we design are in rural areas, and we like the approach of a carport plus a storage area," says Burleson. "People can contain their storage needs better if there's a defined room, rather than just filling up the garage."

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Barn-raising in a blizzard

A couple from the Washington, D.C., area wanted to build on property they owned in Boyne City, Mich., near Lake Charlevoix. However, their first stab at a floor plan was unsuccessful. "The house was 140 feet long and all one story," says Andrew Button, general manager for Grantham, N.H.-based Yankee Barn Homes (YBH). "None of it made any sense. So we had them come and visit us in New Hampshire."

The clients loved Yankee Barn's post-and-beam designs, which include cottages, barns, and farmhouses. While the company has a portfolio to spark customers' imaginations, no two homes are exactly alike, Button says.

YBH designers helped the couple create a new floor plan. "We tried to incorporate two masters downstairs and it just wouldn't work, especially since they were looking for a traditional farmhouse," he says. "So we designed it with a second-floor master."

The 3,099-square-foot home is currently a second home but will be the clients' retirement home in a few years, says Button. When their parents visit, they stay in the first-floor master suite and the clients move upstairs. A secondary bedroom and bath on the upper level accommodate guests.

The foyer, great room, dining room, and kitchen flow into each other. There are only two support columns, allowing unobstructed views through the space. The open plan also makes the home accessible to a wide range of individuals regardless of their physical capabilities.

Because it's on a bluff above the lake, the placement of the house was critical. Northern Michigan gets a lot of snow and rain, and there are natural springs in the bluff. "We had to get the water



PHOTOS: YANKEE BARN HOMES

The second-story balcony floats above the great room and offers a peek at nearby Lake Charlevoix.

to run down that hill into a swale so it wouldn't back up into the house," says Melissa Adelaine-Supernault of Adelaine Construction, Harbor Springs, Mich. In some areas, the property was backfilled to a depth of approximately 4 feet to create a flat building surface.

This was the builder's first experience with YBH, and Adelaine-Supernault says the process went very smoothly despite severe weather. "The day the shell package was delivered, we got 2 1/2 feet of snow," she says. "I called the county road commission because we were in blizzard whiteout conditions and I was worried about our semis blocking traffic." Snow-plow drivers were alerted to look for the vehicles and guide them safely to the site.

The shell package included the post-and-beam frame, pre-cut and notched; precut 2 x 8 rafters; second-floor timber joists and decking; prestained siding; and pine trim. Adelaine Construction was able to erect the shell and make it weathertight in just eight days. "Andy [Button] said it was the fastest set they'd ever seen," she says.

For greater stability in a region where humidity and drastic temperature swings can wreak havoc with building materials, Adelaine installed engineered wood flooring over a concrete subfloor that has radiant heating. Kiln-dried, Douglas fir post-and-beam timbers add a rustic, barnlike flavor throughout the home.

"We went with very clean finishes to show off the architecture of the house," says Adelaine-Supernault. Button adds, "Although the design incorporates a lot of modern features like fiber-cement siding, it still has that classic symmetry of an old barn or farmhouse."

From start to finish, the entire project took about five months. "The clients wanted it to be under \$700,000, and it came in under \$700,000," says Button. "They were very pleased to be able to do exactly what they wanted and still stay on budget." **CB**



The clients made some adventurous color choices, especially in the kitchen. The oak cabinets are stained black, the countertops are an olive color, and the flooring has a gray-green hue.



The window wall at the rear of the home faces north and captures views of the woods. The cupola has a light that can be turned on like a beacon when the homeowners are expecting visitors.

POST-AND-BEAM DREAMS

There's no shortage of timber-frame companies in the U.S., so why choose Yankee Barn Homes (YBH) of Grantham, N.H.? According to general manager Andrew Button, YBH works harder to make the process inherently builder-friendly.

"We build our own wall and roof panels, which are easy for general contractors to use versus, say, structural insulated panels," says Button.

He says YBH offers the only panelized roof system with a built-in vent, which keeps the outer roof cold and reduces the formation of ice on the surface. The wall panels are fully wood framed and load bearing, with an insulation value of R-26. Most windows are pre-installed. Half-lap joinery — a strong, cost-efficient method that is much less labor-intensive than mortise-and-tenon joinery — results in simpler connections that eliminate the need for a specialized joinery crew.

Most shells are enclosed and ready for siding and roofing in 12 to 17 days — or eight days, in the case of the Michigan home featured in this article.

"We're used to building custom, stick-built homes and log homes, so having Yankee Barn pre-cut almost everything we needed and just putting it together like an erector set was extremely efficient for our guys," says Melissa Adelaine-Supernault of Adelaine



PHOTO: YANKEE BARN HOMES

Using pre-cut components from a post-and-beam company cuts out a lot of site work. Most shell packages from Yankee Barn Homes can be erected and made weathertight in a little over two weeks.

Construction in Harbor Springs, Mich., which built the Michigan home. "When custom on-site modifications were needed, we were able to take care of those right away and just keep going."

Excluding land and site work, the turnkey cost of a Yankee Barn home, from foundation to appliances, is generally \$200 and up per square foot, depending on interior finishes.