





PHOTOS BY **TIM MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY**

Building Livable for a Living

BY DEIRDRE PEPIN

Rob and Elizabeth Taylor's home on upper Fish Creek Falls Road is really just a bunch of stacked boxes. But when you see how the boxes work together and understand the rationale behind the architecture and design elements, you realize that simplicity is beautiful. Initial design inspiration came from one singular image of a French powder room plus a fixed enthusiasm for a Sub Zero glass door refrigerator. The second level was conceived as a tree house for the couple's three young kids. The home is a creative and pragmatic cocktail of contemporary and spacious mountain modern along with touches of traditional and rustic east coast farmhouse.

It sounds so basic to hear Rob talk about the house he built almost exclusively by himself. Rob drew the plans within the confines of the original home's existing footprint and submitted them for approval. Aside from a little help on nights and weekends, he single-handedly tackled the electrical, wiring, framing, siding, tile, decks, and concrete. Rob's a perfectionist who believes in working hard.

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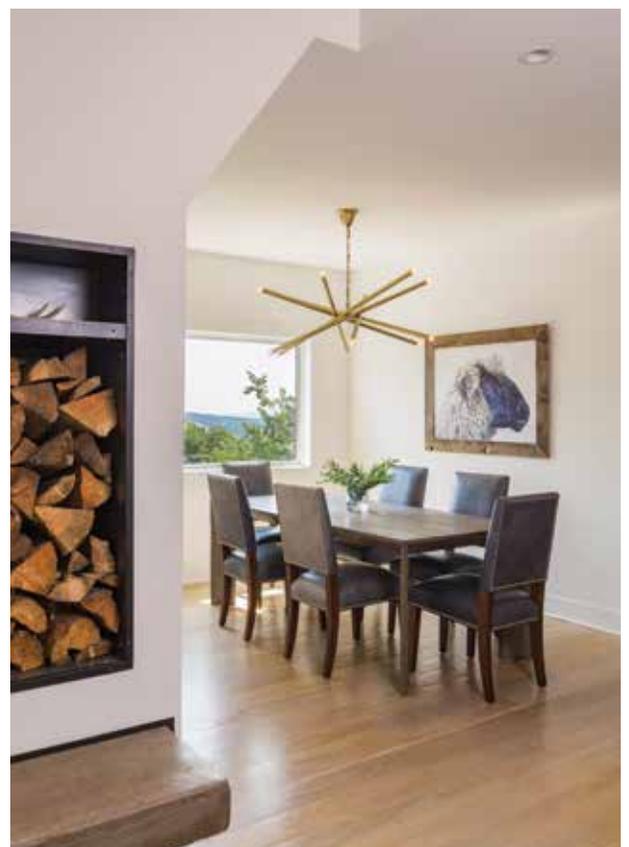


The five-bedroom 3,700 square foot house (not including the garages) represents the Taylor's long awaited return to Colorado. Rob and Elizabeth met at the University of Colorado Boulder. They loved the Rocky Mountains and always planned to return someday. After living in North Carolina and having their first two children, they decided it was time to put their plan into action.

Their personal journey culminated in a home that's a practical combination of North Carolina architectural influences and mountain modern form. The home has clean lines and colors throughout, and the Taylors were committed to making everything both relevant and sensible. "The design is simple. We let the features and furnishings speak for themselves. We wanted everything to feel good," Rob says.

The main entrance opens to white oak floors and a bright dining area. With a classic antique brass chandelier over the table, the sunlit room is elegant and modest. The space flows to a large U-shaped kitchen and a main living area with a deck extending toward downtown. By design, everything is oriented towards Emerald Mountain to capitalize on the vista and sunlight.

The kitchen island countertop's honed Carrera marble is gorgeous and durable. It's porous with a flat finish and shows more signs of life's inevitable imperfections than polished marble would, but it's Elizabeth's all-time favorite stone for countertops. Exuding





east coast craftsmanship, the Shaker cabinets are ingeniously straightforward. The polished nickel brass tab pulls on the cabinets bring in a modern touch while the kitchen's open shelves capped in stainless steel add a unique flare. Rob's ability to visualize and incorporate distinctive construction details illustrates the unique skill set he has as both craftsman and design-builder.

To the right of the main entrance is an exposed white oak and steel staircase. Sitting in the heart of the home, the stairwell welcomes visitors and experiences high activity. The steel handrails are sturdy, reliable, and safe—a priority with little kids. Incorporating so much steel into the shaft of the stairwell was a new endeavor for Rob, and both he and Elizabeth love the cool, sleek look. From a design perspective, it's a perfect example of their guiding philosophy: splurge in the most important areas of your home, not the entire home itself.

The rest of the main level has the master suite and a guest bedroom. The bedroom doors are traditional five panel Shaker. Their French Beret blue paint radiates a rich warmth that complements the home's dominant neutrals. Upstairs there are two bedrooms for the kids separated by a Jack and Jill bathroom with a barn door, offering a rustic decorative accent.

At the top of the stairs is the kids' tree house. "Rob wanted to design a space that was completely their own," Elizabeth

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explains. “The shared bathroom makes the rooms feel connected and the window seat in the library nook is a cozy place to read or build Legos.” The kids can play for hours at the art table and there’s built-in storage to help organize toys. Once the kids get older, the Taylors will finish off the tree house roof deck and unlock the door to more outside space, fresh mountain air, and sunset specials.

At the bottom of the stairs is the lower level with stained cement flooring. The cement is affordable and functional with an aesthetic appeal. It’s cool in the summertime and, with radiant heat, warm in the wintertime. The hallway acts as a mudroom, featuring large Shaker-style black matte cabinets with leather straps for additional creative detail. The hallway leads to a caretaker unit at one end and garages at the other end. A two-car garage with a contemporary glass door sits adjacent to a separate third garage, built for the sole purpose of housing the vintage Land Cruiser 1975 FJ-40 Rob bought when he was 15.

The house just uphill from the Taylors belongs to their best friends dating back to college. Rob also built this house, but he had help from owners Kevin and Gaby Riegler, and architect Michael Current of Current Architects in Vail. The five-bedroom 4,400 square foot home shares concepts in common with Rob and Elizabeth’s home, but it has its own identity. Kevin and Gaby both have extensive backgrounds in real estate development and are passionate about design. They initially purchased their lot as a potential investment, but after visiting Steamboat, they decided to move westward from Washington, DC and build.

The Rieglers wanted a mountain chalet, but undeniably, they lean toward modern. The horizontal siding is reclaimed Montana Coral Board weathered with a silver patina that alternates with vertical green fir. While some of the same wood is used as accessory inside, Kevin and Gaby didn’t use a lot of timber, utilizing more steel and glass instead. Wanting to embrace the landscape, almost every wall seems like it’s a window. The light that comes in is vital and striking. The front entrance itself is made of glass, and the moment you walk inside, you see and feel the light. “The design vision was to have something that was elegant, but rugged enough to handle their active lifestyle. Something that was a little more contemporary, but also timeless in its use of natural materials. Something that was very responsive to the site, it’s natural topography, and sweeping mountain and valley views,” Architect Michael Current says.

The main level draws you into the kitchen and main living area. The white oak skip sawn flooring brings in a rustic, natural look. The kitchen cabinets feature leather pulls and the large island countertop is a luxurious and long-lasting white Macabus quartzite. The kitchen flows seamlessly into the living area that’s wrapped in nothing but floor-to-ceiling



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windows, boasts a high ceiling, and features a stone fireplace accented by a cement hearth. The wall with the fireplace is the only internal wall in the open floor plan. While the Macabus represents the Rieglers' priority and willingness, similar to the Taylors', to splurge in the right places, the hearth reveals their equal appreciation for functionality and affordability.

Through the main living area is the master suite. The bedroom faces northeast and its wall of glass doors opens to a bucolic sight of secluded trees and meadow. "The master bedroom feels like it's outside in an aspen grove," Gaby indulges. And Kevin agrees: "It's a fantasy that we live here. There's nothing we take for granted."

Wood stairs with steel handrails and accents lead to the upper level. Across from the stairwell is a beautifully unembellished office with windows, a built-in desk, and a barn door. On one end of the floor is a bedroom for their toddler twins and on the other is the hotel room: a suite with the home's best views designed to entice grandparents to visit often and allow them to feel comfortable in their own space.

The bottom level of the house has the same concrete flooring the Taylors have plus two more bedrooms. Yet to be finished is the rec room with wet bar and patio. With three young kids in all, a rec room speaks to the prevailing idea of investing in priorities and the belief in making a house fun and livable. "There's nothing in the house that's over the top," Kevin says.



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“We tried to build our house to fit our needs.”

What’s unique and impressive about these two homes and families is that, together, they are Grove Mountain Properties, a new Real Estate Development, Investment, and Construction Company. Their vision is to be part of the Steamboat community for the long term. Built into their own homes are Grove Mountain’s governing principles. The Taylors and Riegler don’t believe in spending money on things people don’t need or won’t use. They believe the home-building process should be fun and shouldn’t get lost in scale. And they believe homes should reflect personal values and actual lifestyles.

With the Taylors in construction and marketing and the Riegler in development and investment, the fledgling company is a true family business. With six kids under six on neighboring Steamboat lots and their own homes as job sites, it takes a lot of trust in each other and in the process of organic evolution. The company has grown to include team members who are equally diligent, tireless, and dedicated to the vision. “We’ve matured from working on projects to working on business,” Rob notes. “We’re chasing the Steamboat lifestyle,” Kevin adds, “and we know we have to work really hard to get it.” **HL**



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