



The front of this Dallas house features a landscape design by Mesa Design Group.

## The Forever Home

A Dallas couple in their 50s has built the last house they'll ever need with an elegant design that will age gracefully.

*by Jen Renzi. Photographs by Stephen Karlisch*

**AFTER TWO DECADES** of living in a traditional house that didn't quite suit their aesthetic, Kelly and Philip Parsons decided it was time to build their dream home. The fiftysomething couple, both CFOs—she at a private equity firm, he in the restaurant business—craved a connection to nature that can be elusive in muggy, buggy Texas. “We wanted to enjoy indoor-outdoor living and entertaining as we’ve experienced it during our travels, from the Atlas Mountains to the Amalfi Coast,” Kelly says.

But they also wanted a house they could roost in for the long haul. This meant designing a floor plan that would allow for single-level living plus a wing to eventually accommodate Kelly’s aging parents, and perhaps a caregiver. Such advance thinking is increasingly common, observes Jean Liu, who oversaw the interior design. “For the past two years, I’ve worked with an inordinate number of clients creating what we call their forever homes,” she explains. “In almost every sit-

uation we’re identifying where an elevator should go and how we can transition bathrooms and hallways into wheelchair-accessible spaces if needed down the line.”

Designed by Jason and Signe Smith, the husband-and-wife principals of Smitharc Architects, the new house sits on a verdant plot in the slow-paced Preston Hollow neighborhood. “The site’s mature oaks and north-facing exposure to the street were the biggest design drivers,” Jason says. Building the structure close to the rear property line allowed for the largest possible front lawn, which functions as a sort of backyard. Floor-to-ceiling glass walls and doors connect the open-plan main level to the lawn and a birch-filled central courtyard, intertwining indoors and out in Möbius-strip fashion. “This is a dense neighborhood,”



In the den, the Elizabeth sofa by Modloft is upholstered in Duralee velvet; the custom coffee table is by Mark Jupiter. The room has motorized drapes by Sunbrella. *Below:* In the kitchen, the dining table is by Mark Jupiter with chairs from Studio Twenty Seven.

Jean explains, “but the way the house is situated makes it feel really private.”

The stacked limestone used for the façade extends into the living area and den to give those rooms a sense of grounding and gravitas. “For us,” says Philip, “part of building a forever house was using materials that are really robust and have a timeless component.” That thinking also informed the choice of waxed steel and anodized aluminum for the kitchen cabinetry, accented with countertops of sintered porcelain stone. “That material is our go-to because it’s absolutely bullet-proof,” says Jason. Upholstery fabrics were selected in the same vein: Jean dressed the curved-back sofas, for instance, in hardy but luxe acrylic that withstands rigorous use by the family’s two dachshunds. (Durability even extends to the infrastructure; the house has a generator and a safe room, essential during tornado season.)

The decor is all about contrast, “a push and pull dynamic of hard against soft, dark against light, shiny against matte,” says





The integrated bench and wall panel in the primary bedroom was made by Kienast Homes; the wool rug is by Patterson Flynn Martin.

Jean. “We used a lot of texture to honor the architecture while ensuring the house doesn’t read too cold or museum-like.” Furnishings are sculptural in feel and primarily custom, designed for accessibility and ease of movement. “I was thinking about their use by all different age groups and sizes of people,” says Jean. Take the heirloom-quality walnut dining table, by Brooklyn artisan Mark Jupiter, that is the locus of many multigenerational family feasts. The weighty timber-slab top rests on skeletal steel legs that facilitate getting in and out of chairs during meals. “Although the design looks straightforward, in actuality it’s an engineering feat,” says Jean. “I’ve never seen anything quite like his level of detail and finish.”

The interior is filled with Scandinavian-inflected grays and yellows that jibe nicely with the surrounding greenery and make it easier for the owners to switch out decorative elements over time. “A strong palette can potentially lock you in, but neutrals give us lots of flexibility to play around,” says Philip. The only uninhibited exception is the 800-bottle wine cellar, painted fire-engine red. “It’s the one moment,” says Jean, “of throwing caution to the wind!”

The powder room features Calico wallpaper in a Sumi print and a custom sink with a Caesarstone finish.

