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# Home & Garden

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home of the month

August's profile of a well-designed living space  
 Take a look at a photo gallery of the home at [www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com), search 'home.'



## a unified flow

By removing a major load-bearing wall that ran parallel to the front of the Ball Residence, renovators formed a generous space that unites the living room, dining room and kitchen. A steel beam was added to the attic to support the weight of the ceiling and roof. The continuous plane that results makes a 2,200-square-foot house feel much larger than it is.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAMES WEST

# A ranch reimagined

Home of the Month, a collaboration with the N.C. State University College of Design, shows possibilities for constructing a living space built with homeowners' living patterns and preferences in mind. Each month we profile a new home, selected by an expert panel, from designs by area architects. The goal: to offer inspiration and knowledge that can be applied to any living space.

BY JEREMY FICCA  
 GUEST COLUMNIST

As Raleigh and Wake County continue to grow, the demand for single-family housing increases. While much of this demand is satisfied through development along Raleigh's outer rings, attention increasingly is turning to existing housing inside the Beltline.

Many older bungalows are being returned to their previous glory, albeit with modern amenities. Still, a large number of houses from the '50s, '60s and '70s, typically ranches, suffer a less pleasant fate. The age, modest size and perceived lack of style classify many of them as prime candidates for tear-down.

The Ball Residence, inside the Raleigh Beltline, escaped that outcome. In many ways, this is not your grandmother's ranch.

This residential renovation and addition, designed by Cherry Huffman Architects in Raleigh, shows the potential of working with existing housing and evaluating property for more than just land value.

A spare yet gracious entry porch, which begins at the driveway and leads to the front door, welcomes visitors to the Ball Residence. For Louis Cherry, architect of the project, "The porch expresses an important relationship with the existing trees." A series of inverted-U-shaped wooden columns and



## welcome

Visitors to the Ball Residence enter a spare yet gracious entry porch, which begins at the driveway and leads to the front door.

## the project the ball residence

Cherry Lane, Raleigh  
**architect** |  
 Cherry Huffman  
 Architects, Louis  
 Cherry, principal in  
 charge

135 E. Martin St.,  
 Raleigh

Phone: 821-0805  
**location** | Raleigh

**square footage** |  
 1,372 - original house  
 847 addition

**design attributes** |  
 ranch house renovation adds modern touches but remains in scale with the neighborhood and compellingly reuses existing housing stock



## BALL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1E

beams supports a canopy of steel grate. The result — a rhythmic procession that references a line of trees in the front yard — is a contemporary interpretation of the Southern porch.

The south-facing metal grate canopy creates an enclosure while allowing light and air to pass through. The new porch solves a problem found in many ranch



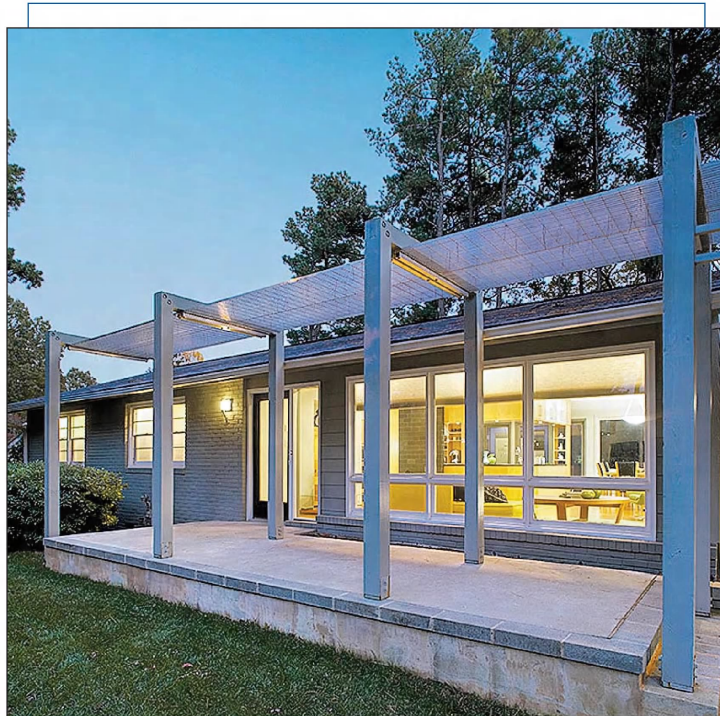
Louis Cherry is the architect.

houses, a lack of meaningful physical connection between the driveway and the front door. It also exemplifies a major aim of the client and the architect — any addition to the house should act as a modern expression while remaining true to the original design.

### Do more with less

Inside the home, the goal was minimalism. While some may associate ranch houses with smaller, disconnected and dimly lit rooms, the Ball Residence couldn't be more different.

When visitors enter the home, they see a dark, floor-to-ceiling vertical stone wall, positioned opposite the front door, which helps to hide the kitchen cooktop beyond. This "greeting wall," as Louis Cherry calls it, serves as a focal point to the generous living space. A second wall of identical material contains the fireplace. Together, these two walls act as sculptural planes and direct the view through a horizontal opening in the perimeter kitchen wall and out toward the lush backyard.



### getting rhythm

A series of inverted-U-shaped wooden columns and beams supports a canopy of steel grate. The result — a rhythmic procession that references a line of trees in the front yard — is a contemporary interpretation of the Southern porch.

The interior materials are limited yet rich. Maple veneer covers the walls and cabinets that define the kitchen space, while dark slate dramatically sets the two vertical stone walls apart from the surrounding white ceiling and walls.

These two walls are indicative of the project, Cherry says — "to do more with fewer pieces as both a response to the budget as well as the homeowner's minimalist philosophy."

The generous space that forms the living room, dining room and kitchen was accomplished by removing a major load-bearing wall that ran parallel to the front of the house. In its place, a steel beam was added to the attic to support the weight of the ceiling and roof. The result? A continuous unbroken ceiling plane that makes this 2,200-square-foot house feel much larger than it is.

The kitchen, near a rear north-facing wall of glass, is more akin to a large piece of minimal furniture than a conventional room. It is positioned in the house so that the wood walls that define its boundaries do not touch the walls of the existing house. From outside the kitchen, the result is a large wooden box that carefully disguises the kitchen within.

As you move through the public space of the house, a dense collection of pine trees draws your eyes through the rear exterior patio space and toward the gently sloping yard. A collection of large existing glass windows and

newly added sliding glass doors aims to connect the interior living spaces with the exterior.

The exterior patio space is completed by the addition of a master bedroom suite to the east and the renovation of a small storage building. The exterior walls of these spaces in concert with the existing house help to define the boundaries of this exterior room, providing privacy while narrowing one's view and projecting the space to the foliage beyond.

Wide, gently terraced steps negotiate the change in elevation that runs the depth of the lot and provide direct access to the rear yard. From here, the subtle and skillful stitching of house to landscape is evident.

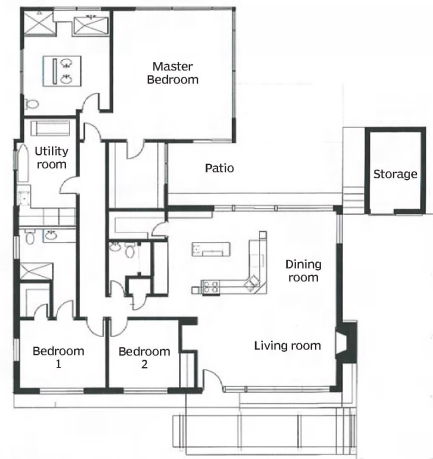
Where the front porch provided a welcoming link to the public realm of the street, the rear patio and terrace offer a retreat free from the distractions of the street. Similar to the vertical stone planes found inside, these two horizontal planes address two basic yet fundamental provisions of a house, a link to the public and a place of repose.

A redesign such as the Ball Residence provides an example of a solution to a common renovation need. The limited number of care-

### the plan

By carefully choosing the alterations, owners were able to receive a transformed property on a limited budget — one that reflects their desire to live with less.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JAMES WEST



fully chosen alterations are proof of the ability to achieve a significant transformation despite a limited budget. The minimalist strategy is driven in part by economics, but it also reflects a desire of the homeowner to live with less. As land and home values continue their ascent, we should look to the example set in the Ball Residence and more closely assess the latent potential in existing houses.

Jeremy Ficca is a past faculty member in the School of Architecture at N.C. State University and a current faculty member in the School of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University. He and his wife are partners in the firm Ficca Architecture, based in Pittsburgh.

### quiet space

Where the front porch provides a welcoming link to the public, other spaces offer retreats free from the distractions of the street.



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