

home of the month

May's profile of a well-designed space

See more photos and check out previous entries at www.newsobserver.com, key word: **architectural**. Next month's home: The Webb Dotti House



□ exterior

A dramatic cantilevered canopy shelters the entry, and the eye-catching roof hints at the drama of the public spine.

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From the ashes, something brighter

Today's Home of the Month is reviewed by Katie Wakeford, an architectural intern for the N.C. State College of Design's Home Environments Design Initiative. Home of the Month, a collaboration with the College of Design, shows possibilities in constructing a living space that's well thought-out and built with the homeowners' living patterns and preferences in mind. Each month, we'll 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 KATIE WAKEFORD

GUEST COLUMNIST

When Raleigh City Council member Thomas Crowder and his family dreamed of a new house, it was a bittersweet dream, tainted by the loss of their family residence to a fire in the winter of 1998. To design the family's new home, Crowder, whose day job is architect/owner of Architekturf PA, and his team created a space that captures the comfortable, easy living atmosphere of the old home in addition to offering plenty of natural light and room for entertaining.

In the end, the Crowders — Thomas; his wife, Kay; and their children, Rachel and Garrett — did not have to leave the southwest Raleigh neighborhood that they love. Their new elegant, contemporary home was built on the site of the old one, alongside the 1950s ranch-style homes that line the streets of the established neighborhood. Completed in 2000, the Ashburton Road house demonstrates a respect for the neighborhood, as well as a careful integration with the natural surroundings and an expressive use of a rich

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□ the project

Ashburton Road

Architect | Architekturf, PA

Project location | Raleigh

Beds/baths | 3/2½

Heated square footage | 2,400

Cost | Unavailable

Key design concept | Sensitivity to neighborhood, indoor/outdoor living, daylighting and passive solar strategies.

PROJECT CREDITS | GENERAL CONTRACTOR: TW SMITH COMPANY INC. | STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT: LYSACHT & ASSOCIATES INC. | MECHANICAL CONSULTANT: ATLANTEC ENGINEERS | LANDSCAPE CONCEPT: BELL-GLAZNER DESIGN GROUP | PHOTOGRAPHER: JWEST PRODUCTIONS

HOME

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palette of materials.

The footprint of the old house is incorporated into the new one. The front of the house sits on the foundation of the original structure. Taking cues from the midcentury designs around it, the front facade of the single story elevation is clad in brick and stucco. Steel-cased windows with horizontal mullions recall the Modernist aesthetic of the 1950s era.

Inside, the bedrooms are at the front of the house, with the master suite on the south and the children's bedrooms on the north, giving family members plenty of privacy. Along the central spine of the home, a dramatic arching roof shelters open public spaces — the foyer, kitchen and a living room.

The entry hall doubles as an exhibit area, or gallery, for the Crowders' art collection. This is Kay Crowder's favorite spot in the house. It leads to an airy kitchen and living area, where casual entertaining and family gatherings flow easily within the generous space. Less compartmentalized than traditional residential architecture, the open plan is well-suited to today's less formal lifestyles.

Lowered soffits at the entry, around the kitchen bar and in the living room seating area create inviting "rooms within a room" settings by moderating the scale of the open living space. A dining area to the south is perfect for a quiet sit-down meal.

Plenty of built-in storage reminds the family of similar features they enjoyed in the original house. Built-ins, which include a catch-all kitchen desk cleverly disguised behind cabinet doors, also contribute to the clean, uncluttered aesthetic.

The public spaces are laid out on the east-west axis, allowing for excellent natural light and passive solar thermal control. The arching roof, with its high clerestory windows, open to the south, eliminating the need for artificial lighting during the daytime.

Portions of exposed concrete on the floor and concrete masonry walls absorb solar warmth during winter days and radiate it in the evenings. Concrete masonry walls offer structural support and safely enclose the mechanical equipment that caused the 1998 fire that destroyed the Crowder house. Doublewythe construction — two layers of concrete masonry units with an air gap and rigid insulation between — boasts excellent insulation value. Color-matched mortar gives the walls an especially refined appearance.

The cool concrete gracefully partners with the warmth of wood. Stunning laminated wood beams and a tongue-and-groove wood ceiling span the main living space. Exposed steel columns and beams accentuate the structure and add yet another material contrast. Hardwood floors and maple cabinetry contribute color and texture.

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect of the Crowder residence is the seamless connections between the interior and exterior. A 16-foot wall of sliding glass is all that separates the main living space from the Japanese-inspired garden on the north side of the house. Here, Kay Crowder, the family's horticulturist, created a soothing oasis with lush vegetation and a koi pond. Daughter Rachel, a recent high school graduate, says this space — where the inside and outside meet, and where she is surrounded by her father's architecture and her mother's garden — is her favorite part of the house.

Born of disaster, the Ashburton Road home sensitively responds to his family's needs, says Thomas Crowder. But its rebirth reaches beyond just that. Says Crowder: "The design process was part of our family's healing after the fire."

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Home and Garden editor Weta Ray Clark contributed to this report.



interior The cool contemporary elegance of concrete gracefully partners with the warmth of wood in the living room. Stunning laminated wood beams and a tongue-and-groove wood ceiling span the main living space. Exposed steel columns and beams add another material contrast as well as tell the story of how the house is constructed. Hardwood floors and maple cabinetry contribute color and texture. Architect and homeowner Thomas Crowder says of the space, made for casual living: "Visually it opens up to the outside and the room feels much larger than it actually is. The view of the koi pond extends the living space outside."



panel's comments An "interesting response to disaster. ... The magic and elegance of the house is especially apparent at night."

the kitchen The kitchen is the heart of this house. Lowered soffits create an inviting setting by moderating the scale of the open living space. The result: a sense of "rooms within a room." Architect Thomas Crowder also had his wife, Kay, in mind when he included the soffits in the design. "She's only 5 feet tall. Soffits help define the space as well as bring a human scale to the space," he said. Upper kitchen cabinets were also lowered to allow Crowder's wife access to them.

architect's aim "The house was our opportunity to start anew from the respect of custom-designing our home according to our specific needs as a family. We like to entertain. The public spine allows us to do things that we weren't able to do in our pre-existing home," Crowder said. The house also was designed to adapt as the family's lives progressed. Grab bars can be added if necessary, and the house is wheelchair accessible. When the children are gone, the bedrooms can easily accommodate the Crowders' parents, Crowder said. "We've designed the home to evolve as we evolve."



Crowder



- the plan**
- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Entrance gallery | 10 Work space |
| 2 Study | 11 Storage |
| 3 Bedroom | 12 Living room |
| 4 Window seat | 13 Dining room |
| 5 Master bedroom | 14 Gardening room |
| 6 Wardrobe | 15 Mechanical |
| 7 Linens | 16 Patio |
| 8 Laundry pantry | 17 Parking |
| 9 Kitchen | |

