

View Finder

Green Builder's VISION House Aspen show home maximizes the indoor-outdoor relationship for year-round lifestyle. By Cati O'Keefe

One thing the VISION House Aspen isn't short on is places for your eye to rove, notes developer/builder Gerry Hazelbaker, president of Paradigm Construction Corp. "From out front you can see all four ski areas—three 14,000-square-foot peaks." That drama can't outshine the views out the back, which extend beyond the vast meadows of waving grasses and on to the red rock cliffs, mountain ridges, and big sky. It's a very pastoral setting, which is



equally awe-inspiring. "It's just dramatic in all directions," agrees Stace McGee, founder and president of EDI, the project architect.

And so a high priority for this project was to open the views and bring them in.

The luxury green buyer is particularly interested in making nature part of his purchase, and builders in this niche can



The architect-builder team of the VISION House Aspen used materials as well as design to address the indoor-outdoor relationship. Stone for the outdoor hardscape was mined nearby, and the team carefully considered how transitions would feel. As you approach the main entry, you come under a radiant canopy and flow inside, as the interior and exterior become one.



The windows of the VISION House Aspen are placed not just to take in views, but also to show views within their context. A window of a top of a mountain with little sense of the foreground loses some of its drama, notes architect Stace McGee.

capitalize on this preference by using design to tie in the environmental theme.

The VISION House team started with the site selection. "When Gerry took us around in the beginning and we were looking at projects in the Aspen area, it became apparent that this is not just a winter destination—it's a year-round

destination. And many houses didn't take that into consideration," notes McGee.

Once they chose the site, the team wanted a design that would provide a seamless indoor-outdoor feel. "While the home features sliding wall systems to open it up, it didn't need to have operable doors everywhere. Floor-to-ceiling

Green Scene

Where housing and the environment connect

windows also allow you to visually bring the outdoors in," McGee explains.

Microclimates play an important role in the indoor-outdoor spaces of this house, notes Hazelbaker: "The patios include amenities such as water features and fire pits. Because the house has different microclimates, we took advantage of them in a big way. We designed spaces that you can use at different times of the day or year."

For example, you could walk out of the living room on the south side in semi-temperate weather and warm yourself by the fire pit. "The sun will hit the stone and concrete and keep it warmer longer," Hazelbaker notes.

Conversely, adds McGee, "The living room on the north side stays cooler longer in the summer and offers a big u-shaped outside entertaining area, a full bar and kitchen, warming drawers, a grill, and a refrigerator."

When the owners throw a party, they can slide the walls open, creating a 16' wide doorway. "The walls exist on both sides of the

living room to open it to the north and south for true flow-through. That's where you get the literal indoor-outdoor living space," says Hazelbaker.

Role of Windows

To take advantage of views, the team spec'd 4'-by-8' floor-to-ceiling glass with no mullions for the dining room and master suite. "The idea is to see the near and the far environment, and take it all in," says McGee. "When you are doing indoor-outdoor design, you need to see the adjacent ground or you don't get the full effect."

Some of the glass placement required compromise. "We determined the primary view was placing the emphasis toward Snowmass and the dramatic peaks behind it," explains Hazelbaker. "We had to compromise. Stace wanted to achieve a more southeasterly orientation for solar purposes, and I wanted to swing it away so we could position the home directly on axis to the prime views. From a solar engineering perspective, I don't think we gave up a lot."

People often wonder how a team starts a project like this. After all, with so many views,

the sky's the limit. "Gerry and I stood on site and sketched the rooms that would have views, and moved forward to a layout," McGee explains. "The bedrooms are oriented toward the north pastures and low-lying mountains, while the dramatic views of Snowmass went to the master suite and main living areas."

The outdoor spaces are accessible from the main living areas and from the kitchen and master suite. Plus, all bedrooms have a deck.

McGee points out that the master suite and kitchen areas look out over ponds. "The site has ponds and interconnecting streams," he says. "We tried to engage those in the views. So the foreground view is of ponds, streamways, and vegetation. Then one looks to the dramatic longer views beyond."

Watch the VISION House as it nears completion. We will be following the rest of the build and the final story will appear in our 2010 IBS issue. www.greenbuildermag.com

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