



A 3,500-square-foot house that lives and feels much bigger, and is surrounded outside by even more space, including wetlands.



# Modest Space, Mondo Views >>>



The front side of this rebuilt Mountain Village home faces the golf course. Architect Luke Trujillo of TruLinea added a 75-foot-tall window to help infuse the formerly-dark house with light and a sensation of spaciousness.



A Mountain Village Home Makes the Most of Its Architectural Footprint >>

Like Trujillo, the owner of Tru-  
Linea Architects in Telluride,  
likes to say, “The most import-  
ant project is yours.”

What he didn’t realize when  
he took on a project on Arizona  
Drive was that it would become  
partly his, as well.

Trujillo was more than an architect on  
this job. He was a visionary; he was a team-  
mate; he was even a co-interior designer,  
along with co-owner Wendi Gittler.

Wendi and her husband, Alax, “liked the  
idea that they could save some money and  
remodel a house on a good lot,” Trujillo  
said. They chose a property in Mountain  
Village with open space on three sides  
and tremendous views. “It had a beautiful  
south-facing patio area,” Trujillo recalled.

The patio itself wasn’t there at the time;  
for that matter, neither was pretty much



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Above, a view of local conifers from  
the back porch and (below) the main  
room, with a zinc feature wall — an  
unusual design element — intended  
to “pop out” to create visual interest.

“We decided to keep the footprint small, and add two porches, so you don’t get a claustrophobic feeling.”

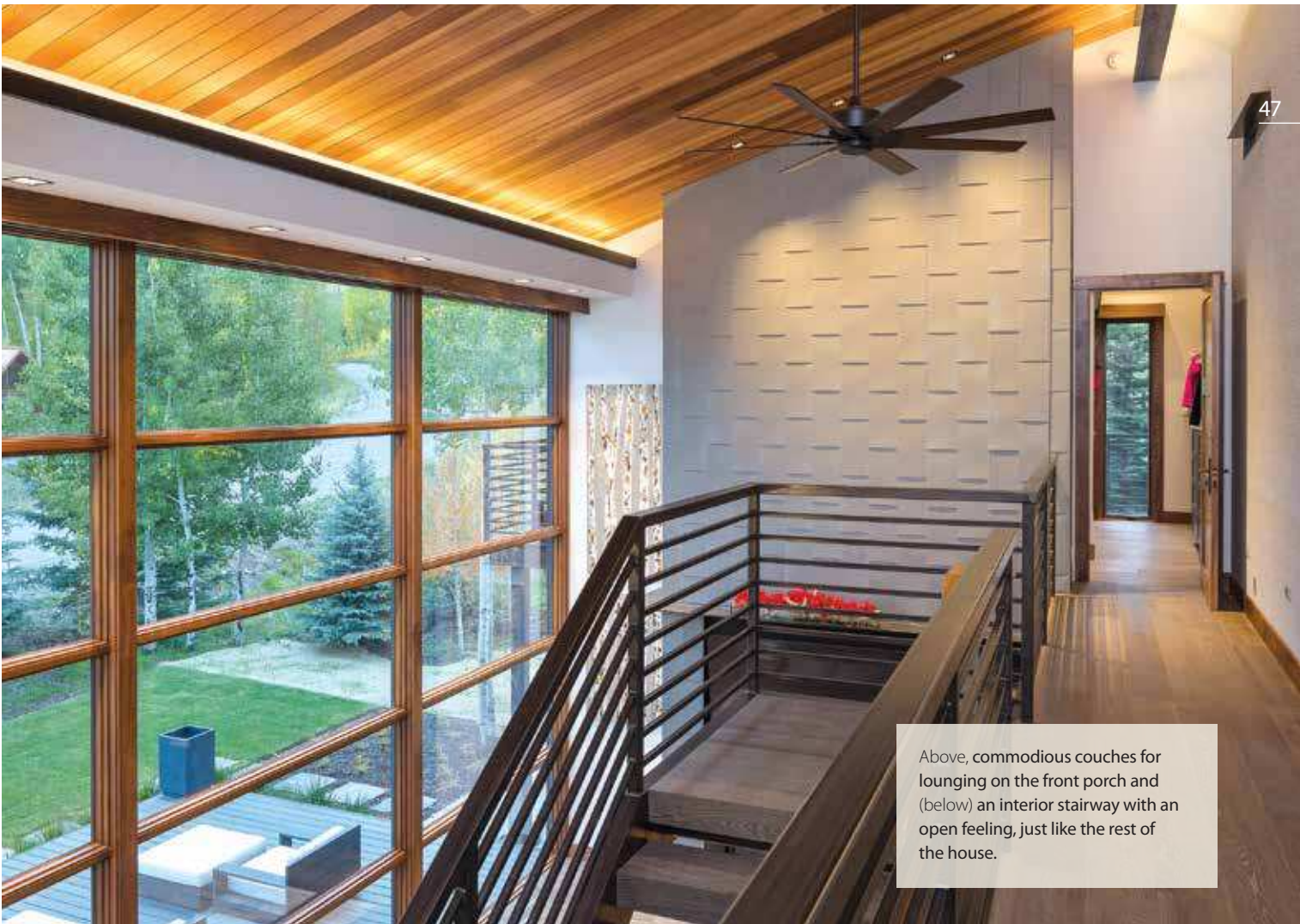


anything else you see when you look at the house today.

With the help of builders Jamey Schuler and Ken Watt at Telluride’s Trifecta Construction, “We pretty much gutted the place down to the studs,” Trujillo said. “The wiring was new and the framing was new, but we were able to save the rooflines, and the foundation was already in place. Just having the mass of the foundations and the rooflines in place, that’s probably 50 percent of your costs right there. Doing a remodel is harder” than building a home from scratch “because you have to demolish and then go forward. But if you’re patient, it’s a really good, cost-conscious way to reinvent a home.”

What emerged from the rebuild was a design born of necessity — to make the most of the home’s small footprint

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Above, commodious couches for lounging on the front porch and (below) an interior stairway with an open feeling, just like the rest of the house.



Above, light enters the bathroom not just from mirrors and clever light treatments, but huge windows; below, the living and dining area encourage big views, even though the home's footprint isn't large.



— and desire — to take advantage of its spectacular setting. Unlike so many other sprawling Mountain Village properties, “It’s not a 10,000-square-foot-house,” Trujillo noted. “It’s a 3,500-square-foot house. The thing that helped differentiate this design was adding new patios and porches and decks, which made smaller spaces seem larger by giving them their own exterior spaces.”

He also installed a huge, 19-foot-tall, 27-foot-wide glass window wall on the home’s front side, and all-new interior lighting. “We wanted a lot of indirect lighting at night to give it a glow, so it felt comfortable,” he explained. Although beautiful and compelling, the window wall created a potential problem. “There was a concern about a lot of light spilling from that front glass window at night,” and out into the rest of the neighborhood, Trujillo said. The architect got around this by adding a light “cove” at the top of the window that shines light up and across the ceiling (as opposed to directly through the big window). “There’s also a shade system the Gittlers can drop at night” for more privacy, Trujillo said. Beneath the cove, a series of recessed can lights “shine down on the TV room, but not out.” Professional consultancy firm AE Design, in Denver, assisted with lighting. “We applied the same technical rigor to the lighting that we did to the rest of the house,” Trujillo said. “My undergraduate program at C.U. Boulder (in architecture) was with the principal of that office.”

A sleek, new internal staircase helps sustain the “airy” feeling indoors, and keeps the focus outside. Trujillo didn’t fight the master bedroom’s design: “We decided to keep the footprint small, and add two porches, so you don’t get a claustrophobic feeling.” He added a skylight in the bathroom for the same reason. “We’re trying to make this thing breathe a little,” he said of the home’s interior. “Before, it was very dark and enclosed, which is counterintuitive to being in the mountains.”

The Gittlers spend part of their year in Florida; Trujillo, who grew up in Colorado, is an avid outdoorsman. He knows mountains in general and the San Juans in particular, so when Wendi wondered if he would be willing to collaborate on the interior design, he said yes. As it turned out, his sensibilities dovetailed naturally with hers. “She asked, ‘Can we do this, just the two of us? I said, ‘I think we can.’ We

“The scale’s not too big, and it’s comfortable. It’s not so serious that kids can’t run around and have a good time.”

collaborated and she picked everything out, right down to the doorknobs. I flew down to Miami; it was helpful for me to see what her tastes were in person. From there, we used screen-share software to select everything. Her tastes are modern. We kind of blended that with the Telluride vernacular, which has its own flair.”

Wendi’s preference for cool gray tones suited this home and its many new windows: “You want to see the white and the green and the gold *outside*,” Trujillo said, and not be distracted by other colors within.

The design is generous in its focus on the outdoors — everywhere you look, there is light — and in another way, too: Trujillo added windows in unexpected places, where nobody but the Gittler’s children, and their kids’ friends, would even see them. In the children’s rooms, above the beds, there are lofts with windows that overlook the living room — to allow the kids a chance to spy on the adults in the living room below (why should adults have all the fun?) Other touches — a Victoria + Albert tub and a shower of Carrera marble and inlaid stone in the master bathroom — were “little pieces of jewelry, bits of sparkle,” as Trujillo describes them (why should kids have all the fun?).

“The scale’s not too big, and it’s comfortable. It’s not so serious that kids can’t run around and have a good time,” Trujillo summed up of the design.

His so-called 430 Music Man house, in downtown Telluride, won two awards — the Audience Choice Team Prize and an individual award for Trujillo himself “for the same outstanding project” in the 2016 iteration of Telluride’s Art + Architecture Weekend. The home on Arizona Street will be in the A+A lineup this year. Trujillo summed up his firm’s design philosophy this way back then: TruLinea “constantly pushes details, space and light in all our homes.”

While that may be true, his work in Mountain Village was much more a meeting-of-the-minds than one firm’s vision. “The energy and collaborative effort with Wendi showed up” in the results, Trujillo said. “That doesn’t always happen for architects,” he added a little wistfully. “It’s always client-driven, and some clients can be a little heavy. We were just trying to make this home more beautiful and useful. In the end, I go away — they have to live here.” 📸



Above, two porches add a sense of spaciousness to a small bedroom; middle photo, just up the ladder lies a slot window where kids can “spy” on adults in the living room and (below) children’s beds (which include trundle beds stored below) mimic the cozy feeling of sleeping on a train, and maximize tight space.

