

New Home

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NODA NOVELTY



PHOTOS BY LAYNE BAILEY - lbailey@charlotteobserver.com

and, Fred Cauthen, moved from the Ballantyne area to Card Street in NoDa, lured by its proximity to a no-rules approach to home design. Finding someone to affordably fashion the stairs she wants with a railing made from black powder-coated steel and steel cable - took months.



The 2,600-square-foot home (above) is unique, featuring a sunken living room (below) with painted concrete floors. It's sandwiched between small mill houses and within walking distance of the NoDa arts scene.

It's the contemporary home
she always wanted,
a one-of-a-kind that slows traffic

By CRISTINA BOLLING
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Pat Heller always knew she wanted to live in a modern house. Now she lives in one that sometimes slows traffic.

She spent years planning her dream home the way some girls plan fairy-tale weddings, with folders full of magazine clippings and pictures, and notes from modern-style homes she and husband Fred Cauthen toured.

Last year, the time came to put those plans to use. They sold their home in a Ballantyne-area subdivision and bought a quarter-acre plot of land in the NoDa arts district. The former mill village along North Davidson Street is one of the city's most diverse, fast-changing neighbor-

hoods. To design their house they hired Curtis Sloop of Narmour Wright Creech Architecture, who worked on some of the area's most hip, urban projects.

The builder was Justin Hansen of Elite Properties; interior design was by Kenny Campbell.

The result is a head-turning 2,600-square-foot home sporting a cool, industrial look that makes drivers slow to a crawl as they drive past. The home features a stucco and cement board exterior, metal commercial garage doors and galvanized tin roof. But getting to the finished product, which cost between \$400,000

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3 TIPS TO BE UNIQUE

2H | Pat Heller offers her advice on how to stand out from the crowd.

NoDa novelty home is her dream, others' curiosity

Modern from IH

and \$500,000, wasn't easy.

They were determined to make this house uniquely theirs, but Heller and Cauthen found that many of the features they wanted in their new house weren't available in Charlotte. Lighting fixtures, faucets and sinks, even the tub they envisioned, weren't the types they could buy from local stores.

Take the kitchen countertops. Although granite is the standard countertop surface in most upscale homes, Heller went with hand-painted concrete. "I wanted to do something different," she said.

Finding someone to affordably fashion the stairs she wanted — stained oak steps with a railing made from black powder-coated steel — took months.

The kitchen cabinets are from California; the knobless handles on the front door are from Australia. Even the gas fireplace in the living room, with a ribbon of flame instead of a fake log, was purchased online.

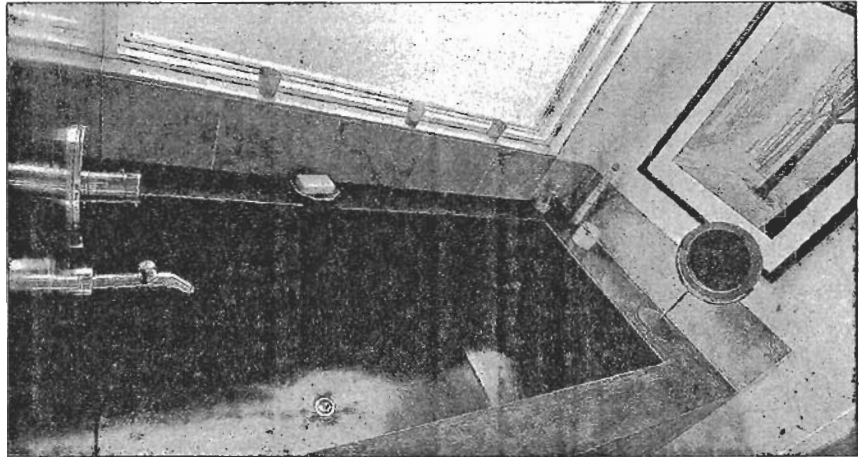
Walk through the front door and you're in the couple's dining room, with the kitchen and sunken living room in clear view. In the dining area, crystals hang from a long lighting fixture over a simple table and chairs.

Heller loves to cook, so she compiled all her must-haves and pet peeves and shared them with Sloop. They collaborated on a kitchen to meet all her needs.

A 4-by-8-foot butcher-block-topped island is open on one side, so Heller can easily access cookbooks and cooking tools.

A stainless-steel Thermador cooktop has a large hood so cooking fumes don't permeate the house, and two ovens make for faster preparation when they entertain.

Like the kitchen countertops, the steps leading down to the sunken living room were also hand-painted by Eric Cockrell, a concrete specialist and fine artist. A storefront-style window in the living room allows light to



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The concrete tub in Pat Heller and her husband, Fred Cauthen's modern house.

spill into the room, and simple white floor-to-ceiling curtains are found throughout the first-floor living area.

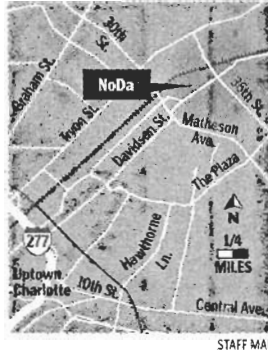
A wall with cutouts at the top and bottom divides the living room from a family room.

Beyond that is the couple's bedroom, warmed by hardwood floors. In the master bath, Cockrell spent a month building and hand-painting a 3-foot-deep concrete soaking tub and 10-foot-high door-less, curtain-less walk-in shower, along with countertops in the same black and gold finish.

Up the steel and oak staircase are an office and a guest room that share a jack-and-jill bathroom. Heller and Cauthen pulled the bathroom's twin white ceramic wall-mounted sinks out of a junkyard in Mount Pleasant and had them restored.

The couple's favorite feature upstairs is the 22-by-23-foot rooftop patio, a space they copied after seeing a similar one in a showhouse years ago. "When the leaves fall off the trees, we'll be able to see downtown," Cauthen says.

Sloop says he was excited when Heller told him of her vision: urban and modern with industrial-type details. Aluminum storefront windows. A metal



STAFF MAP

roof. Polished concrete.

"She was very specific, and she didn't waver from that at all," Sloop said.

"She wanted to kind of experiment with materials that were substitutes for typical applications that would give it a hip look," he said. They decided on stucco for the front of the home and cement-based siding for the sides and the back. Columns made of tin in the front give the look that the house is being supported by steel beams.

Sloop said he was amazed and impressed when Heller and Cauthen, both baby boomers, came to him with their plans.

"No one has ever come to me

Seek to Be Unique?

Can't find what you want in local stores? Here are some of Pat Heller's tips for getting your hands on unique fixtures and supplies you won't find in your neighbor's houses:

- Read specialty magazines. Heller is an avid reader of the modern home-design magazine "Dwell," so she used the product references in the back of the magazine to get ideas and find sources.

- Be organized. Heller kept files for lots of categories, from bathroom fixtures to lighting, in a tote bag. That made it easy to bring her ideas to meetings with those who designed and built her house.

- Ask about return policies when you buy from out-of-state companies or on-line. Heller was fortunate to not have to return anything she bought online, but "because some purchases are pricey, it's always good to know if you'll be able to get your money back.

of their age and lifestyle looking to move from Ballantyne housing into something like this," Sloop said.