



# RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS  
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 2, 2024

## The Familiar House





## Concord Blend

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS  
ECK MACNEELY ARCHITECTS

**Before they lived in** their current residence—whose design was meticulously orchestrated by Eck MacNeely Architects—the owners had lived in a series of modernist houses they didn't much like. If they needed a reason to try something more traditional, this location certainly offered it. The road on which the 2-acre lot sits runs along the Concord River and leads to Concord's historic landmarks. It provided the impetus to design a dwelling that felt homier and more comfortable for the couple and their three children on the cusp of adulthood.





Jeremiah Eck, FAIA, is well known for this kind of work. His Boston firm’s custom houses are modern in concept but imbued with a vernacular New England familiarity that is sometimes hard for passersby to pinpoint. With its gabled volumes, clapboard siding, and glass-filled walls, this house too is a dexterous mix of aesthetic genealogies.

Other than indicating their programmatic requests, the clients gave the

architects a virtual blank slate to design “something of interest,” Jeremiah says.

It wasn’t the first house on the property. The couple, who had lived nearby for some time, bought the original small split-level for their parents. When their parents moved to a retirement community, the couple decided to take it down and build something new for themselves. Despite the relatively large lot, however, there wasn’t much room to maneuver the

5,300-square-foot house, partly because half the parcel is a wetland that required a 50-foot setback. The program was another factor: the clients wanted generous living spaces, a separate wing for three bedrooms, and an exercise/multipurpose room, plus a screened porch, Pilates studio, and detached garage. Another non-negotiable condition was the preservation of a large specimen tree on the property. “The tree makes a big difference in how the scale of the house feels,” Jeremiah says.

To minimize the massing and maximize sunlight, the design team pulled the program apart to create three pavilion-like structures built into a small hill that slopes down from the street. The main volume bends away from the roughly perpendicular kids’ bedroom wing, creating an elbow that shelters a central terrace at the rear of the house. Below the kids’ rooms is the requested exercise room, while the primary suite sits above part of the public space and connects to a family room (formerly earmarked for Pilates) and deck over the detached garage.





**Point, Counterpoint**

“A single structure might have been easier, but it would have felt massive; it’s more fun this way,” says Jeremiah. “The plan separates the public areas from the private bedrooms by placing the primary bedroom on the second floor and the kids’ rooms in a separate wing on the opposite side of the house. It allowed us

to free up the living space with lots of glass and a view of the meadow, which is lovely year-round.”

The divide-and-conquer approach also invites a dialogue between modern and vernacular. “The gable roof goes back hundreds of years in this country; it’s really about shedding snow and rain,” Jeremiah says. “I wanted to start

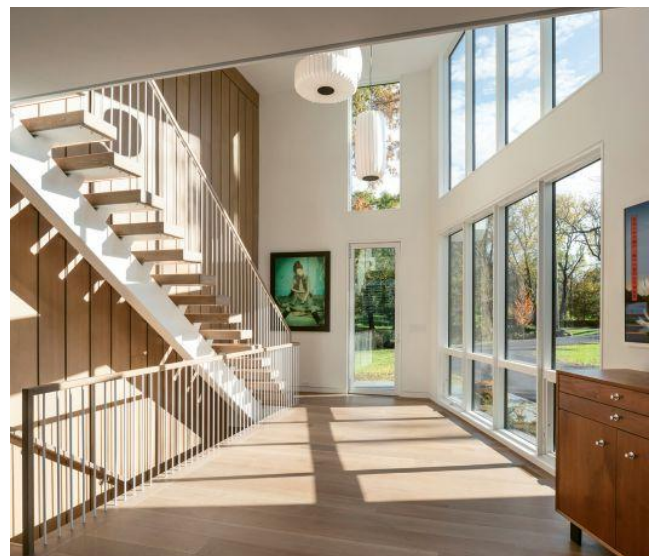
there with a 45-degree roof pitch on the three pavilions. The steep roof slope gives you, with some judicious planning of dormers, usable room upstairs. Then I broke it down by providing shed dormers in the bedrooms and a bath. Those are the elements that give the house a traditional shape.”

Flat roofs on the glassy connectors and living volume tie the theme together in a modern way. The garage elevation’s glass gable end is another forward-thinking touch, countered with smaller double-hung windows on most of the house. “The owners tell me that people stop by on the street and take pictures,” Jeremiah says. “I think they are interested in that type of blend in ways that are deep-seated. Especially when they’re lit at night, the garage pavilion’s gable end and two-story foyer are spectacular, which is unusual for a house.”

Its skin reinforces the blend of 20th- and 21st-century sensibilities. The upper level is clad in smooth composite panels with a nickel gap, while the base is cedar shingles, further reducing the house’s scale. Its standing-seam metal roof recalls local barns.



Two galleries converge at the foyer, leading to the secondary bedroom wing straight ahead, or right to the main living space. Upstairs, a catwalk connects the primary bedroom to the family room.





## Light Boxes

Interiors are limned in light—the big payoff in designing rooms with four exposures. Coming in from the driveway, visitors encounter the double-height foyer. At right a main staircase ascends to the primary suite and family room. Straight ahead are art-filled glassy corridors leading in two directions, one to the public spaces, the other to the kids’ bedrooms. Because of the lot’s gentle downward slope, this second corridor meets the bedroom wing just below the second-level floor plate: a few steps up are the bedrooms; a few steps down is the exercise room.

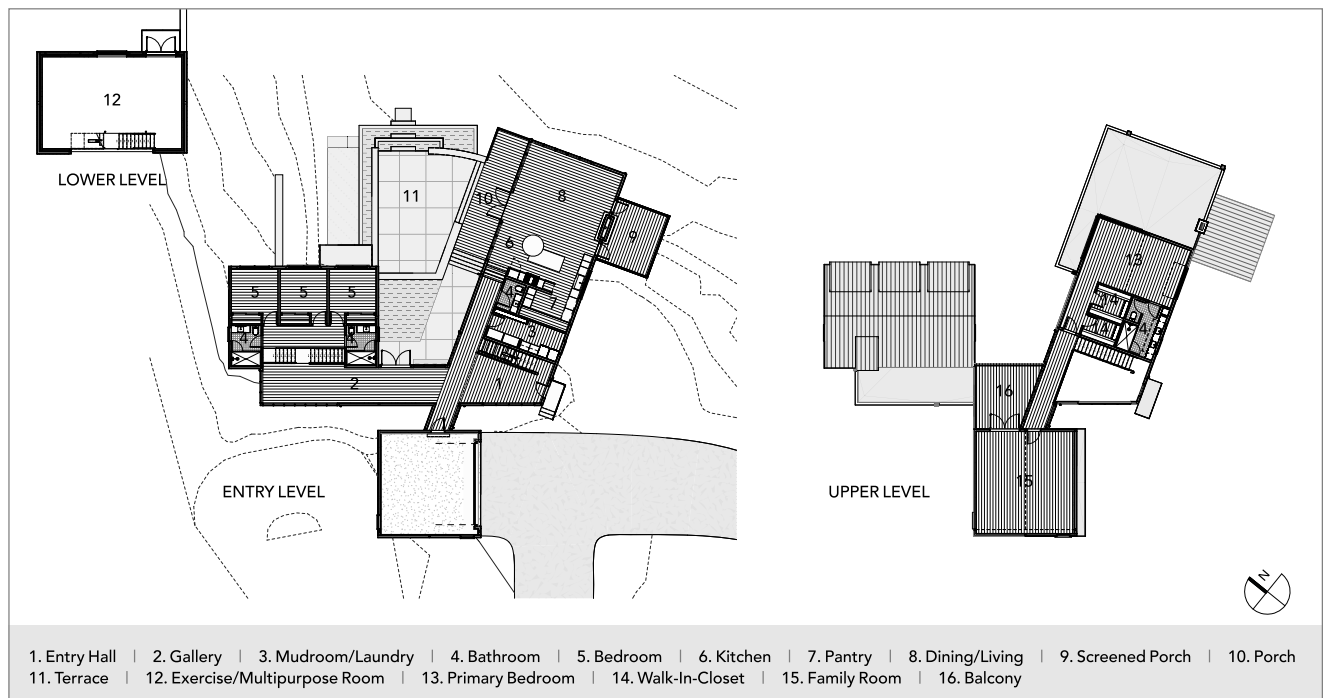
“They wanted a contemporary living area and more traditional



Large windows in the open kitchen, living, and dining room keep the wetlands on display, while a two-sided fireplace visually connects the living area and screened porch. The home’s mix of double-hung windows and window walls marry traditional with modern.



*This page:* In the primary bathroom, boldly patterned quartz walls enliven quiet interiors. *Opposite:* The second-floor family room's unexpected glass gable end spills light to the street at night. Downstairs on the opposite side of the house, the screened porch overlooks the wetlands.







bedrooms in terms of shape and size,” Jeremiah says. The terrace, held within the two volumes, opens out from the public space, whose southeast corner is 50 feet from the wetland. The sun enters in the morning and moves across it. In summer the terrace receives both morning and late afternoon sun.

Wrapped in metal casing, a two-sided fireplace creates a visual connection between the living room and screened porch and warms the porch during the shoulder seasons. “The fireplace makes the screened porch a nice experience,” Jeremiah says. “Concord can be buggy, especially along the wetlands.”



Boldly veined quartz composite accents in the SieMatic kitchen and baths add pops of pattern to the understated interiors. The rift-cut walnut kitchen incorporates an island with a round table where the owners have their morning coffee. White oak floor planks, which are radiant heated, are repeated as thick treads on the main staircase. Floating on a tubular steel stringer, the treads are fitted with LEDs for nuanced nighttime lighting. “The stair rails are thin, 4

## Concord Blend

Concord, Massachusetts  
Eck MacNeely Architects

**ARCHITECT:** Jeremiah Eck, FAIA, principal in charge; Rachel Hanson, project architect, Eck MacNeely Architects, Boston

**BUILDER:** Brian Johnson, BOJ Construction, Plymouth, Massachusetts

**INTERIOR DESIGNER:** Polly Lewis, Lewis Interiors, Boston

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT:** Stephen Stimson, FASLA, Stephen Stimson Associates, Cambridge, Massachusetts

**PROJECT SIZE:** 5,300 square feet

**SITE SIZE:** 2 acres

**CONSTRUCTION COST:** Withheld

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Anton Grassl Architectural Photography

### KEY PRODUCTS

**CABINETRY:** Kitchen and bath by SieMatic

Boston

**COOKING VENTILATION:** Thermador

**COOKTOP/OVENS:** Gaggenau

**CUSTOM BUILT-INS:** CWC Millwork

**DISHWASHER:** Gaggenau

**ENTRY DOORS:** Marvin

**EXTERIOR CLADDING:** TruExterior Nickle Gap Shiplap, Maibec cedar shingles

**EXTERIOR TRIM:** TruExterior Trim

**FAUCETS:** Dornbracht, Waterworks

**FINISH MATERIALS:** White oak walls and beams

**FIREPLACE:** Ortal Tunnel fireplace with Neolith interior face

**FLOORING:** 8-inch quartersawn white oak by Carlisle Wide Plank Floors

**GARAGE DOORS:** Haas

**HOME THEATER COMPONENTS:** Samsung Art Frame TVs

**HUMIDITY CONTROL:** AprilAire

**HVAC:** Carrier heat pumps

**LANDSCAPE PAVERS, STEPS, WALL CAPS:** Blue Mist granite

**LIGHTING:** BEGA, RAB, Tech Lighting, Element, KKDC, Moooi

**PAINT:** Benjamin Moore

**PASSAGE DOORS:** Emtek Helios

**RADIANT HEATING:** Hydro Radiant, Nuheat

**REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER:** Gaggenau

**SECURITY SYSTEM:** Ring

**SINKS:** TOTO, Kohler

**SOUND SYSTEM:** Sonos

**SPECIALTY APPLIANCES:** Thermador

**ROOFING:** Englert standing-seam metal

**THERMAL AND MOISTURE BARRIERS:** Henry Blueskin

**TUBS:** BainUltra Origami collection

**UNDERLAYMENT, SHEATHING:** AdvanTech

**WINDOWS:** Marvin



inches on center with an oak cap that blends with the treads,” Jeremiah says. “I try to simmer it down to the simplest solution.” Likewise, the stairwell walls are oak paneled with reveals that line up with the treads, a gesture to the nickel gap siding outside.

The architects worked with local landscape architect Stephen Stimson to finesse the landscape’s subtle grade changes and revegetate it with native plants. The home’s proximity to the wetland also required special drainage systems to manage the high groundwater table. “We did some pretty extensive

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—Jeremiah Eck, FAIA

draining and waterproofing to make sure the house stays dry,” says builder Brian Johnson. “There are two different basements, both just about in the groundwater, and three systems to keep

water away from house, plus an interior drainage system and sump pump with alarms.” Detention systems, designed by the engineer, contain the water until it can percolate back into the ground.

Building on New England’s recognizable architectural traditions, the house feels entirely of its place but without being a replica of anything. Instead, it is a singular expression that results from fashioning form and light in a distinctive way. Rendered in cedar-and-composite siding, gabled metal roofs, and simple shed dormers, it bows to the legacy of its forebearers. **RD**