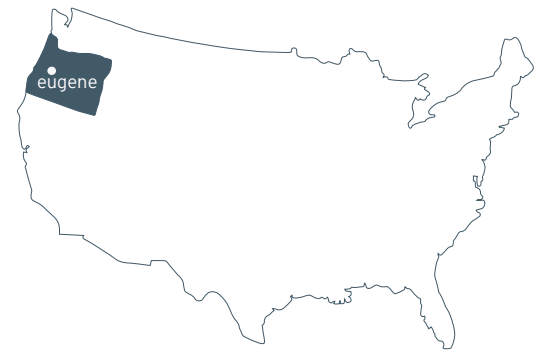


SHUGAR HILL HOUSE



Architect: Richard Shugar AIA, LEED AP
General Contractor: Stephen Kneller

Completed 2001
Eugene, Oregon
1964 sf new construction



The Site

Searching for the perfect lot took the owners three years, but when they saw it, they knew it was the place. The lot had a view of Spencer Butte, was set in a quiet neighborhood of moderately priced homes, and within walking distance of an elementary school and grocery store. Better yet, they could afford it. They wanted to capture the views, particularly of the butte, but they didn't want to remove existing trees. "What inspired us was the lot, the site and the view," said Shugar, who designed the home. "That's why the house became what it did."

"I wanted the site to be the first thing you experienced," he said. To accomplish this, Richard aligned the home's front entrance with a sliding glass door leading directly out to the back deck. Visitors are greeted in the entryway by an expansive skyline, lush treetops and radiant sunsets. "I really like the fact that the trees are in my way," said Richard. "It gives me a filtered view instead of just one massive view that never changes." The deck, which the Shugars describe as their "outdoor room," is nestled comfortably into the corner of the home's L-shaped design and can be seen from virtually every part of the house, including two second-story balconies.

The owners' love for nature is apparent both inside and out. The entire house is folded into a small grove of trees that occupied the lot before the home was ever built. The largest among them is a giant Douglas fir that towers just outside the living room. Two stories of windows allow an unobstructed view of the tree from its base to its highest boughs, all of which can be enjoyed from the comfort of the living-room sofa. The trees lend seasonal variety to the magnificent view of the valley.

Concept Design

The heart of the house consists of a conjoined kitchen and dining area, opening onto a cozy living room. Details such as lighting, an area rug and subtle variations in ceiling design help to define each area as a separate living space.

Although the house is modest in size (under 2,000 square feet), an open floor plan and an upstairs loft provide a spacious feel similar to a larger home without a sprawling footprint. The design also allows them to entertain visitors while preparing meals and to monitor their two children as they play in other areas of the home. "The house is designed specifically to accommodate how we like to live, which is in a really open, informal way," said Richard. "We didn't need a formal dining room or a separate kitchen. There are no hallways. It's all one contiguous space."

Furthermore, by limiting the size of the house, the Shugars were able to splurge on the luxury amenities that they valued most, like a stainless-steel refrigerator, large counters (30 inches deep instead of the standard 24 inches) and plenty of light. Numerous large windows, skylights, an open-tread staircase and an angled roof, allow light to pour into every nook of the home. "The most important elements of the house were the windows and the light," said Richard. "Where the sun enters the house gives it volume and shapes the experiences that we have."











Sustainability

Green aspects of the home's design include the use of a sustainable, medium-density fiber board for the interior trim; durable Trex decking for longevity; nontoxic, low-VOC paint; and salvaged carpet remnants to reduce waste. Structurally insulated ceiling panels (SIPs) help to prevent heat loss and keep energy costs from, quite literally, going through the roof. In the winter, radiant heating—hot water flowing through plastic tubes to heat gypcrete tunnels in the floor—keeps the house a warm, even temperature. Ceiling fans and well-placed windows ventilate the home during the summer. “We don’t have air conditioning, and we really don’t need it,” said Richard. “We have the shade from the trees and plenty of windows to keep air flowing.”

Richard kept materials simple but true to the Oregon vernacular on the exterior of the two-story home. Barn-red plywood siding combined with cedar shingles reflects the farmhouse and bungalow styles of the area, while galvanized steel on overhangs offers practical protection from the elements, as well as unexpected flash floods. Rain chains channel water from the gutters, while the “butterfly” roofline adds to the custom feel of the house. “People seem to think it’s dramatic and different,” he says. “But it’s really a very simple method of directing rain off your roof.”





Creativity

This is a house that embodies the spirit of creativity and the art of compromise. Some of the trade-offs were simple. When the bamboo flooring they'd set their sights on cost several thousand dollars more than an engineered-wood floor, they went with the less expensive. Instead of buying a pricey hutch, Richard designed legs for a wall cabinet to imitate the look of furniture. And, rather than splurge on a designer refrigerator, he mimicked a high-end design by building cabinets alongside and above the stainless steel, standard-depth appliance.

For kitchen countertops, granite would have been ideal, but costly. Richard opted for laminate, the least expensive countertop material, then added a designer edge by rimming the counters in birch plywood. "It looks like a solid piece of edging with a series of horizontal stripes," he explains. "It's actually three layers of plywood glued together with a clear lacquer finish over the top."

Some trade-offs are temporary. When Richard discovered there was no money left for the two-sided family room fireplace, he built a bench in its place, leaving open the possibility of a fireplace later. Likewise, the Shugars make do with old bookshelves and curtains in place of the built-in pantry they'd prefer.

But in at least one instance, compromise was just not an option. Vinyl windows would have cost half as much as wood windows, but the trade-off was not worth the savings. "The rooms we live in are shaped by natural light," Richard says. "How that enters a room needs to be well thought out and well designed. Using wood windows really helped capture that."







A medley of brightly colored walls and spirited carpeting guides the visitor from the play area, past a small office and the master bath (complete with a transom window, a two-headed shower and a Jacuzzi bathtub) into the master bedroom. The bedroom's interior is modest. Matching his-and-hers closets frame the bed, which rests under a window against a bright purple wall.

A second butterfly roof creates a dormer above the bed and high ceilings that explode out onto a third balcony. Its overhanging design provides some shade for the lower deck, and a steel cable railing allows for an unobstructed view of the yard below. Like the rest of the home, this second-story retreat allows the family to engage each other and their environment with ease and comfort.

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