

New Ideas Draw a Crowd in Denver

by Ann Marie Moriarty

Looking at new and remodeled houses – on Houzz, or HGTV, or even the neighbors’ new kitchens and baths – may soon replace baseball as our national pastime. And the Home Builders Association of Metro Denver’s annual Parade of Homes is happy to let the public indulge that guilty pleasure by inviting them to visit various neighborhoods and communities to look at examples of the best its builders, associates and suppliers have to offer.

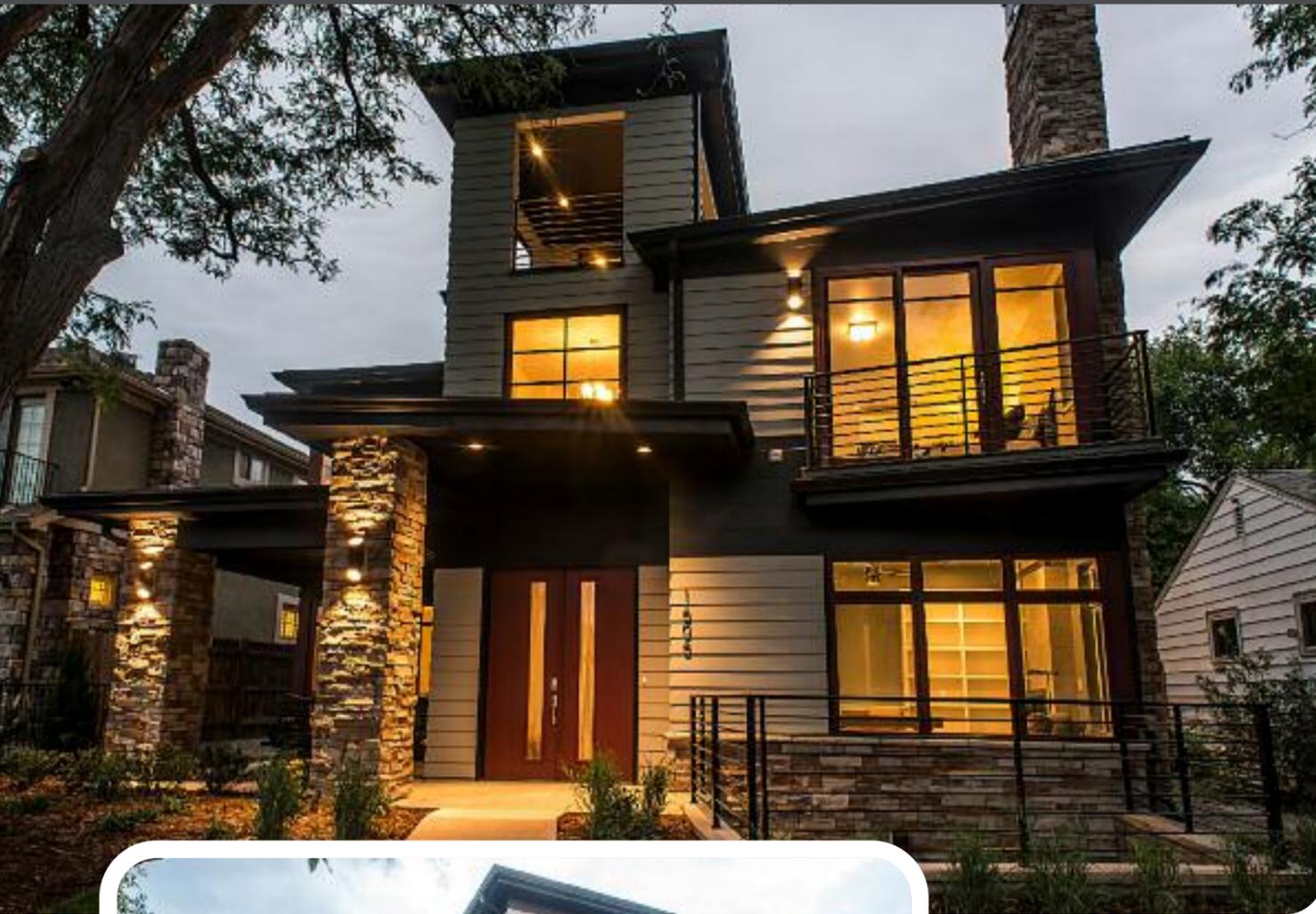
Custom design-builder David Jackson, Centennial, Colo., had participated in such events before, but his most recent entry, the New Idea Home, became much more than just a stop on a tour.

The Idea

Jackson had talked with Robert August, also an HBA member, who suggested that Instead of simply showing one of his very nice spec homes, Jackson could make a bigger impact by building a home that presented all the trends consumers were reading about, wondering about, and probably hadn’t seen yet. August, a sales and marketing consultant, predicted that such a home would attract crowds “because it had a story to tell.” He suggested that “visitors could learn about five main themes: design trends, water conservation, wellness and health features, energy efficiency and universal design.”

Sounds complicated and expensive, right? But August, through his consulting firm, North Star Synergies, often worked with local suppliers and national manufacturers – and he was certain that they would support such an ambitious effort with donations of materials, upgraded products and the newest technology.

Jackson was interested. His company, Jackson Design Build, always incorporated as many sustainable, energy-efficient and universal design features as he thought the client’s budget would support – and for spec homes, as many of those features he knew the market would support.



Photographer: Philip Wegener

Each of the four living levels has its own distinctive outdoor access.





The interior has an open plan. Hallways are at least 46 inches wide, and stairs have a lower rise, extra width and high-traction surfaces.



The open floor plan extends into the kitchen for easy work and traffic flow. Circulation routes are a spacious 44 inches.

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“Universal design makes the house more comfortable, and it appeals to all buyers. It’s just good architecture,” he said, noting that he’d had Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist training. Jackson thought that creating a show house focusing on cutting-edge systems, features, products and design would intrigue people and draw them in.

The Plan

August saw this as a chance to highlight not just Jackson Design Build and the Denver HBA, but also every participating manufacturer and vendor – a public relations triple play. By the time he’d spoken with all the suppliers and manufacturers on his list, he’d generated \$350,000 worth of materials and upgrades for the home.

Once the donations were incorporated into the design, Jackson was ready to go. He had purchased a site in Denver’s Cory-Merrill neighborhood near the University

of Denver, an actively gentrifying area. It’s very near the downtown, said Jackson, “about a 15-minute bike ride away.” Jackson had bought and either renovated or replaced about 50 homes in that area since 1999, and in the current market he’s been able to sell the new or remodeled homes for “between \$1 million and \$2 million,” he said. Building this home, however, was “very labor-intensive,” and took about 10 months.

The Finished Product

The New Idea Home is large – 3,878 square feet in the three main living areas, plus a finished basement, for a total of 6,174 square feet. From the street, it’s about the same width as other houses in the neighborhood, but it extends further back than most. Only the dramatic top floor and chimney suggest that there’s a lot more going on inside.



The living room's high-performance fireplace is vented with combustion air intake. Flooring is smooth, durable and slip-resistant.

The house has four levels, and the main living area on the ground floor presents an open plan. There are five distinct bedroom/bath suites in the house, each with its own outdoor terrace or balcony. Jackson entered the house in the 2018 Best of 55+ Housing Awards in the Universal Design category – it's a finalist – and the entry describes it as a “modern, urbanist, 25-room retreat that can meet the needs of a growing family, or a family with older children, empty nesters or a multi-generational household” – in other words, a home with the flexibility to accommodate pretty much anyone.

The list of features is lengthy, but highlights include a barrier-free entry in front, back, garage and bathrooms; designated space for a future elevator to access all four floors, if needed; wide stairways, doors and hallways; Energy Star and Indoor airPLUS compliance; electronic “smart home” systems; and xeriscaping with drought-tolerant plants that conserve water and energy while complementing the outdoor environment.

The Tour

The house was open for only 17 days, but every day was packed with consumer education sessions and receptions. Manufacturers and suppliers invited their clients to see the products installed in a lovely setting. And many manufacturers encouraged visitors to order their products right there at the house. “We used the house all day, every day,” said August.

The no-fee Parade of Homes had attendance upwards of 100,000 people, and the New Idea Home, with 5,000+ visitors, had the near non-stop traffic. Jackson and August joined manufacturers and vendors, as well as the project's lender and others with a role in the project, to staff the home and answer people's questions.

One visitor who'd toured the house before it was complete purchased it three months before the Parade of Homes events with the stipulation that it would be open to the public at that time. The price was very close to \$1.5 million, but in August's opinion, it would likely appraise for closer to \$1.8 million because of all the donated upgrades.

The bottom line: The New Idea Home was a success on all fronts. It kicked Jackson Design Build's already stellar reputation up a notch. It delivered benefits to the HBA's sponsors and associate members. And it informed thousands of people about the possibilities available in a thoughtfully designed and carefully crafted new home.



Closets are walk-in or roll-in. Closet doors are at least 36 inches wide and hardware is placed at reduced, accessible heights.

Bathrooms feature 5' x 5" maneuvering space with slip-resistant flooring, comfort-height toilets and no-step, extra large showers, with controls placed to minimize bending or reaching.

