

# DALLAS

MODERN LUXURY

## HAUTE TO TROT!

**SPECIAL TRAVEL ISSUE**

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# WANDER-LUST



# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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Modernism is a term bandied about sometimes without regard to its provenance, especially when referring to architecture. Uncomplicated form and the absence of ornamentation are mostly what defined the Modernism movement in the early 20th century. The three leading modernist architects of the time were Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, both directors of the Bauhaus, the German art and architecture school that operated from 1919 to 1933, and just as significant, Swiss-born Frenchman Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, who renamed himself Le Corbusier. Though Frank Lloyd Wright's career reached its

height in the same period as these European modernists, he refused to be classified with the others even though his style influenced them and organic architecture overall. Just as diverse, but equally important, many associations of modern design seen throughout Dallas are born of the later Eames-driven mid-century modern period.

Armed with your brief history lesson, let's take a look at the changing complexion of our city's residential architecture. Aside from the high-rise contemporary living boom not to be confused with classic modernism, Dallas continues to burgeon with urban developers establishing new and resurrecting old modernist neighborhoods such as Kessler Park. In this issue, we profile three of the most lauded: Sky Modern, Urban Reserve and Hamilton Properties. "Urbane Legends" Matt Holley, Diane Cheatham and Larry Hamilton are inspiring residents to journey beyond Old World architecture and embrace the simplified clean lines and a "greener" lifestyle. Check it out on Page 48.

No matter the style, Dallas is rich with great architects, developers and builders who can create virtually anything for you. Built-to-suit, we have designs on your next elevation: our upcoming October launch of *Interiors*, a must-read for the finest contemporaries.

# THE RADAR DESIGN

BY LISA MARTIN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE SHAFER



Diane Cheatham at Urban Reserve's cozy office in an Airstream trailer.

## URBANE LEGENDS *The new kids on the bloc are redesigning Dallas*

They are visionaries who dream of reinventing the very nature of the neighborhood. They have artists' eyes, seeing splendor amid ruins or picturing verdant streets on tracks of land strewn with self-sown shrubs and junk trees. They are risk takers who buck conventional wisdom, butt heads with bankers and thrive on sealing the deal. Three Dallas real estate developers are literally transforming the local landscape into an urban paradise. While their integrity, ambitions and achievements have catapulted each into the national spotlight, these three remain firmly rooted in reality: Concrete and glass, building permits and community relations fill their days. Diane Cheatham, Matt Holley and Larry Hamilton are building hopes, all the while raising the roof on our collective expectations.

Not long after Diane Cheatham decided the time was right to develop one of the first sustainable communities in the country, 13 acres on the banks of White Rock Creek came on the market. That she took as a sign. The CEO of Urban Edge Developers snapped up the property in February 2005 and set about building an unprecedented coalition of talented architects to help execute her vision. The results: Urban Reserve, a modernist neighborhood four miles north of White Rock Lake that will eventually encompass 50 single-family homes. "Most land developers

don't do the construction of houses because you can sell the lots and make a lot more money since you're in and out of the deal," she says. "And most developers would never think of bringing in so many architects." In those respects, and several others, Cheatham's breaking new ground.

The longtime developer also remains intensely committed to the project for the long haul. Not only does she estimate that construction will be ongoing until 2009, but she and her husband also recently finalized plans with NYC-based architects Tod Williams and Billie Tsien on the design of their own three-story, 4,000-square-foot house. The home's small footprint maximizes the lot. That echoes a theme of the entire development, which emphasizes the natural surroundings. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Urban Reserve is an almost organic interfacing between the residences and their woody environs. Moreover, individual houses have eco-friendly amenities, everything from recycled slate roofs that trap rainwater for reuse in irrigation to thermal windows with insulated low-E glazing to a trough and cistern system. Those cisterns are representative of the entire project: Cheatham says each one costs about \$12,000, and, in her words, do not make financial sense. ("If you look at it as cash on cash, the payback is something CONTINUED...



*Left: The sky's the limit? Oak Cliff's Matt Holley.  
Below: Urban Reserve, near White Rock Lake.*



...CONTINUED like 25 years.") The cisterns, however, collect rainwater for landscape irrigation; considering the state's water-related woes, that alone can make all of the difference to a garden.

Water collection spurred the creation of two sustainable retention ponds, one on the north edge, the second more central in the development. All of the dirty, upstream water that runs into the neighborhood will accumulate in the ponds and then be cleaned. The water will be sprinkled on the front lawns of the lots. Meanwhile, green spaces she has dubbed the rain



***OF THE SITE DOWNTOWN NOW KNOWN AS MOSAIC, "IF I'D STOPPED A PASSERBY ON THE STREET AND SAID THAT I THOUGHT IT WAS THE UGLIEST BUILDING IN DALLAS, I WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN MUCH OF AN ARGUMENT."***

gardens serve as three different ribbons of the landscape. The trees (cypress and oaks) and other plants were selected because they thrive in a range of conditions, from very wet to extremely dry.

As for the individual lots, Cheatham eschewed the regular cookie-cutter sizes typical of suburbia in favor of unique shapes that vary in width and depth. That same sentiment led Cheatham to place no minimum square footage requirements for Urban Reserve homes; Cheatham says a fabulous 500-square-foot cottage could work just as well as something ten times that size. Most of the homes, however, will run from 2,800-3,200 square feet. And considering the lots alone range in price from \$150,000-\$384,700, most would-be homeowners are likely to build houses on the large side; she expects some properties to top the \$2 million mark.

Already, various architects have designed some spectacular spec homes. Participating architects include Susan Appleton, Bernbaum Magadini, Brent Brown, Russell Buchanan, Sergio Chavez, Maria Gomez, Max Levy, Robert L. Meckfessel, Lionel Morrison and Dan Shipley. Cheatham's passion for low-impact construction and materials position these homes on the cutting-edge of energy efficiency as well as design.

### **SURFING THE O.C.**

Matt Holley lives green. It's not just that he recycles his newspapers or flips off the lights when he exits a room. The co-owner of the new development and construction company Sky Modern lives amid the treetops in a residence he built at Kessler Woods, his now-famous modernist Oak Cliff neighborhood. He looks out his soaring windows each morning, where towering century-old trees remind him exactly what he loves about this area. Nature makes for an especially appealing neighbor.

Five years ago, this affable and savvy entrepreneur started with four acres in Kessler Park. He now has 20, and when the third phase of his project is completed three or four years from now, Holley will have built \$100 million in real estate on land that had previously held only \$10 million. Since he began his efforts, Oak Cliff has enjoyed a renaissance, with upscale retail and restaurants sprouting like mushrooms. Cause or effect of his ambitious plans? Holley doesn't seem to care. He's moved on to the next project, his biggest to date.

Phases I and II totaled 30 high-end homes, many of which are in the \$2 million range. They all make a strong modernist statement, drawing visual inspiration from the likes of Frank Lloyd Wright, CONTINUED...



Left: Downtown's Mosaic development. Above: Kessler Woods.

...CONTINUED Richard Neutra and Joseph Eichler. "At first, it was a challenge to educate people on this type of architecture and introducing people to Oak Cliff who hadn't visited in years," Holley explains. "That was the heavy lifting. It's gotten easier now that people understand what we're doing and are excited about it." The developer notes that the last three sales in Kessler Woods were to homeowners who previously lived in the Park Cities.

Phase III is make-or-break time, a gusty expansion of his vision that targets a new audience—the middle-class. Holley partnered with INCAP Fund, another Dallas-based real estate developer, to purchase a number of apartment buildings adjacent to Kessler Woods—some 2,000 units in all, many of which are already vacant. Come September, he'll begin tearing those down, eventually replacing them with a mix of condos, townhouses and patio homes. The apartments that will be razed include those with some of the highest incidents of 911 calls and the worst compliance problems in the city. Still, the project has faced its detractors, who decry the displacement of impoverished residents from their apartment homes. Holley praises INCAP for working hard to be fair, offering apartment dwellers a compensation package that includes the equivalent of a month's worth of rent and the refund of their security deposit as well as relocation assistance in Spanish and English. "My dad was in the military so I know what it's like to move, and for poor people it's even harder," he says. "We know this can create a real burden on families and we're trying to help." But progress has its rewards. Priced between \$300,000 to \$1 million, the condos, townhomes and zero-lot-line patio home are likely to lure more affluent residents to the area and that's expected to further stimulate the Oak Cliff economy. His town, he says, is on the rise. Holley's pastures seem equally as green.

## GETTING DOWN IN DOWNTOWN

When a Denver-based developer, credited with helping revitalize that city's downtown, got a tip that several properties in downtown Dallas could use his magic touch, he flew in, scouted around and began relentlessly pursuing financing. His twin targets: the old Magnolia Hotel and the Davis Building. This was 1997, back when "downtown was pretty sleepy, and they'd roll up

the streets after 5PM," recalls Larry Hamilton, CEO of Hamilton Properties. But he and his son, Ted, the company president, saw opportunity. They, apparently, were alone. The developers only secured financing after pledging \$2 million of their own money to the venture. Good move, it turns out. Bolstered by the success of both projects, the duo next purchased the old Dallas Power & Light building, converting it into 158 apartments with 25,000 square feet of retail space.

Today Hamilton, who applauds city leaders for offering incentives for downtown development, has almost completed his latest venture: Mosaic, a two-tower mid-century modern structure at Thanksgiving square, which when completed in September will boast 440 apartments as well as Scene, a 6,600-square-foot Pan-European eatery by Blaine Staniford, the culinary genius behind Fuse (another Hamilton Property venture in downtown). Hamilton contends that the building, which he purchased from TXU, was a diamond in the rough...with an emphasis on rough.

"If I'd stopped a passerby on the street and said that I thought it was the ugliest building in Dallas, I wouldn't have gotten much of an argument." The 1950s structure desperately needed a facelift, but Hamilton appreciated its bones. Plus, he loathes the fact that developers are tearing down buildings from that era right and left. So in November 2005, he and his son embarked on a massive renovation that included adding windows to blank walls and fashioning a 120-foot long infinity-edge swimming pool on the parking garage roof. (Two huge movie screens at the northwest corner of the pool will make for a world-class "dive-in" theater.) According to Ted Hamilton, one of the most intriguing aspects of Mosaic is the museum-scaled art installations on every floor. Step off the elevator on one floor and you'll encounter 60 old telephones in black and white arranged in a checkerboard pattern. They bring that inventive spirit to all of their projects, which include a boutique hotel called Santa Fe IV just south of the Convention Center (construction to begin in September) and Aloft, another small hotel in downtown that's a partnership with Starwood, owner of The W and Westin brands. "We're living at a time when people are celebrating urban living again," says Hamilton. "We're just a part of a cultural shift that's going on nationally." ■