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urban AGENDA

This Grand Junction loft remodel combines big-city attitude with simpler mountain living.

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More bang, less buck makes these homes shine (PAGE 21)

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New directions in mountain architecture (PAGE 28)

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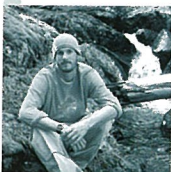
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KAREN ENEKEL-COUTU



Karen Enekel-Coutu has known Valerie and Kevin Brooks for years. She had heard about their loft from a friend and was dying to see it. She ran into the couple a few days later walking the dogs down Main Street, when they asked if she could come and photograph the interior. What serendipity! "When I first saw the loft, I was amazed to see this gorgeous contemporary space on Main Street in Grand Junction, Colo., no less. Valerie was able to create a home that reflects their personalities perfectly. I spent two wonderful days with Valerie and the dogs photographing the interior. The light floods the interior by day; by night, the space becomes an elegant retreat perfect for entertaining. All photo assignments should be such fun!" she says.

SHANE MACOMBER



The Colorado Press Association, Associated Press and Inland Press have all honored Shane Macomber with numerous awards for his work in "documentary photography." Shane graduated in 2001 from the Art

Institute of Colorado and is an active snowboarder, kayaker, golfer and dirt biker.

LU SNYDER



Lu Snyder moved to Frisco seven years ago, when her then-boyfriend/now-husband began building their home. Despite having experienced the frustrations and headaches of building, they sometimes still fantasize about the next home they'd build. Fortunately, that remains a fantasy for now. Instead, they keep busy with their 1-year-old daughter, Autumn, and their dog, Jackson.

H. E. SAPPENFIELD



H. E. Sappenfield loves writing about design and construction of dream homes because it allows her to tap into people's passions and personalities. "What I love is when, through investigation and interview, I learn about an element or look which isn't to my taste at all, yet in seeing it through the eyes of the subject and his reasoning, it becomes fantastic." After writing about the Brooks' loft, Sappenfield was inspired to buy a bus pass and try to live a less car-centered life. Sappenfield's writing has appeared in Better Homes and Gardens, Velo News and Mountain Flyer. Her fiction is currently in Bewildering Stories.

ALLYN HARVEY



Allyn Harvey has spent 18 years as a working journalist, including eight at The Aspen Times. His work has also appeared in The Rocky Mountain News in Denver, The Stranger in Seattle, and a variety of other publications. Allyn

currently provides public relations consulting and keeps a hand in journalism as a freelancer. He lives in Carbondale.

ALEXIE CATALANO



A native Coloradoan and recent graduate of Brooks Institute of Photography, Alexie Catalano currently resides in the Vail Valley. She lives with her goldfish, Frank, enjoys all things food related and rarely ventures

anywhere without her suitcase-sized purse. Aside from photography, Alexie also works in graphic design.



ALIGNED
design

THE EVOLUTION OF
MOUNTAIN ARCHITECTURE



BY H. E. SAPPENFIELD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY VALDEZ
ARCHITECTURE & PAT SUDMEIER

Those who come to the mountains want to be in harmony with nature, in one way or the other. So it only makes sense that an increasing desire for sustainable living and design would be changing Colorado's face of architecture.

"The biggest thing we're seeing," says Freddy Valdez of Valdez Architects in Summit County, "is a focus on sustainability. Everyone who calls wants to do things 'greener' to make the house perform better."

In Aspen, Rich Carr of CCY Architects agrees that sustainability is one of the most powerful forces shaping architecture today. "It is integral to contemporary and progressive mountain architecture."

In 2007, Colorado made sustainability a priority with House Bill 1146, requiring county governments to infuse "green" standards into their building codes. The result: No matter the motivation, homeowners are approaching design with a more organically aligned mindset, rather than going for a traditional mountain home.

"Their approach is to begin with a clean sheet of paper and a fresh idea, and they want to incorporate Western forms with new materials. They're very interested in envisioning something new, as opposed to something that's already been done," says Ann Kreig of Darby Architects in Vail.

Homeowners and architects are now looking much closer at the solar and

alternative energy potentials of building sites and letting design follow energy maximization. This often starts with a smaller building footprint, which usually means less square footage and more open living spaces. Frequently, more contemporary forms accomplish this. One example is a flat or slightly sloped roof.

“A flat roof looks more modern, but they’ve been around a long time,” Valdez says. “Go behind the gabled front of the buildings on Main Street in Frisco or Breckenridge, and you’ll find a flat roof. They perform super well up here, and there’s no dangerous snow shedding situations. They’re also more efficient, because a trussed roof creates unusable heated space.”

People are also leaning toward eco-conscious exterior finish materials, such as metal siding and metal railings, which weather well and patina to a nice color.

“Five years ago, it was just rusty, corrugated metal, but recently there’s more sheet metal and zinc and copper siding as people get used to it,” Valdez says.

Kreig further defines this evolution: “A modern look might come from making design more minimalist. The challenge is to not just use sustainability, but to incorporate it into the design — for instance, using reclaimed barn wood and synthetic shake roofing, having priorities like passive solar, so the house takes advantage of the 300 days of sun in Colorado.”

Anne and Bart Barnett recently completed construction of a home designed by Kreis in the Cordillera Valley Club in Vail Valley. Through site-consciousness, it became far more ecologically sound than they’d dreamed.

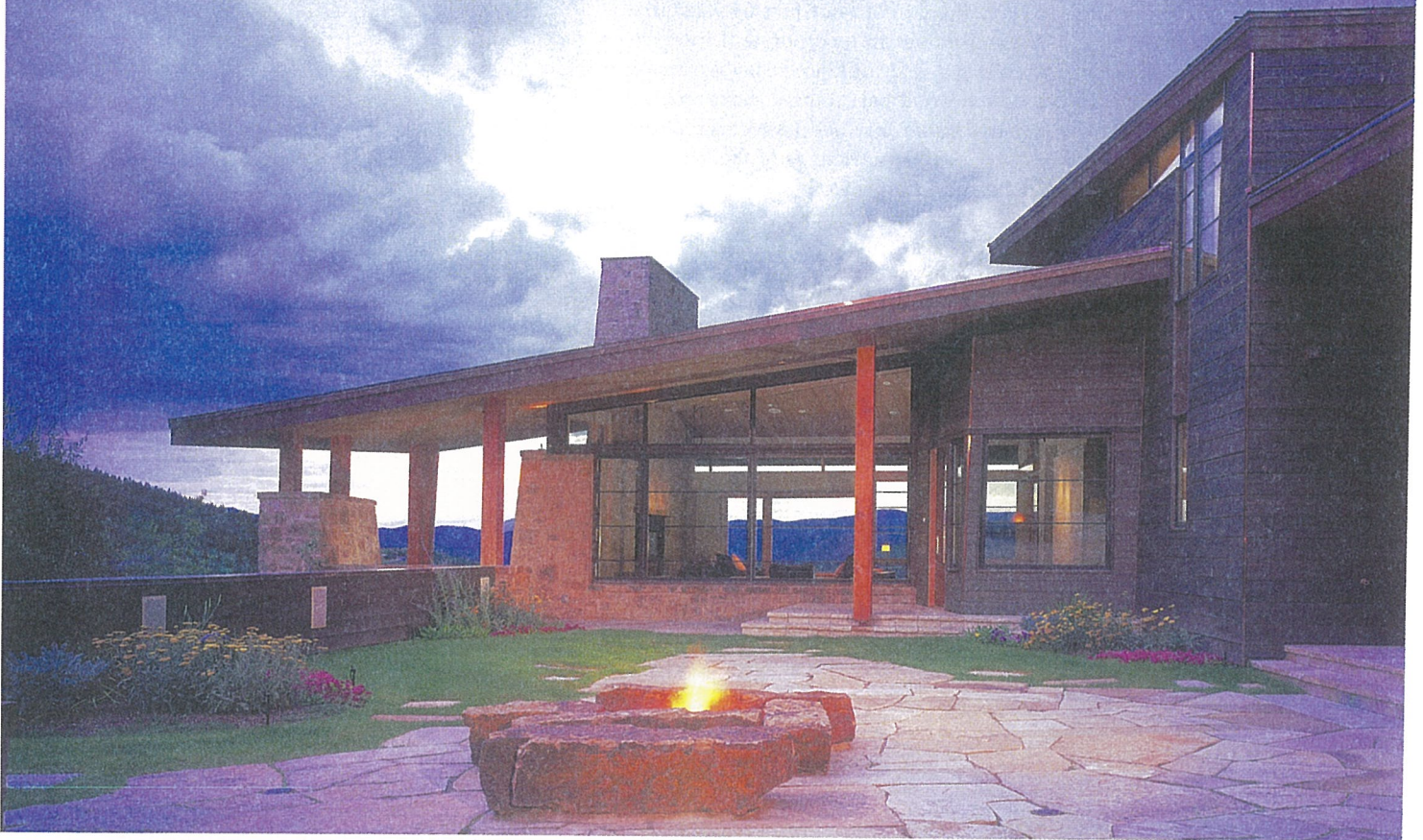
“The house evolved as we created what worked best on the lot, and we got

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ABOVE: A flat roof is more energy efficient, since it doesn't create unusable heated space within the home. EXTERIOR SHOT: More people are turning to metal siding, often in combination with using natural materials for the exterior.

This home is built to soak in the sunlight during the winter. In the summer, sunlight hits the roof rather than the windows, keeping the home cooler. The home also showcases how building outdoor living space is a way to reduce extra square footage in a home. **BELOW**, Light pours into the hallway, which flows into the dining room.



more excited about doing what was more 'green," Bart says. "It was an evolution. For instance, I wanted overhangs because we get hammered by the weather, but (Kreig) took it and made it into a passive solar thing; where the house gets little direct sun in summer, it goes straight over the roof, but the sun just beams in that house in winter."

Kreig considers three priorities after positioning a home on a lot: extra insulation, high performance windows, and a high-efficiency mechanical system. These foundations support interiors influenced by a changing client.

"People who own mountain homes now don't want just log and stone; they want some of the culture of the city, especially modern, professional kitchens and open living spaces, almost like loft living," she says.

Carr sees this as part of a larger trend, which involves a demographic shift and

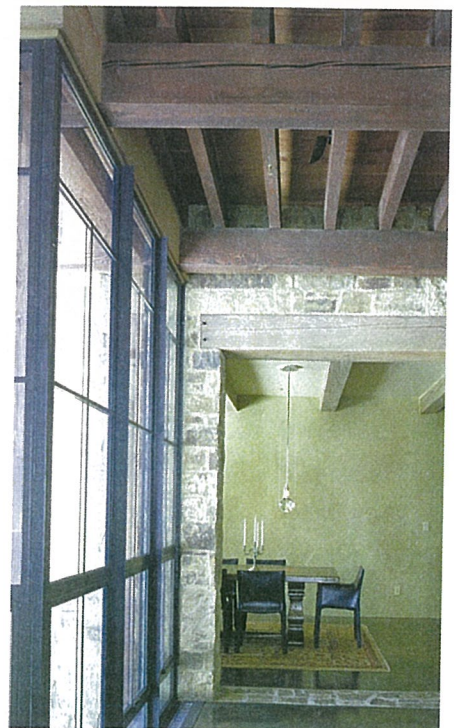
technology. Since telecommunication allows people to live in various climates throughout the world, they begin to discover the beauty of outdoor living. In design, this has evolved into equal focus on outdoor living spaces.

"With good design, we have three seasons where you can live outside," Carr explains. "With a little extra protection from the wind or heat, different areas can be created, some with a focus on view and sun, others which are intentionally more intimate and protected. People can engage the landscape as the climate evolves, which is a big reason why they are here."

Kreig sees design also embracing this region's history as it incorporates sustainability.

"We seem to be drawing on the Western vernacular and historical forms," Kreig notes, "both contemporary

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This home blends metal and glass with natural components of stone to create a modern mountain look, connecting homeowners with "place, nature and today's modern lifestyles in a sustainable way," as Rich Carr of CCY Architects in Aspen puts it.

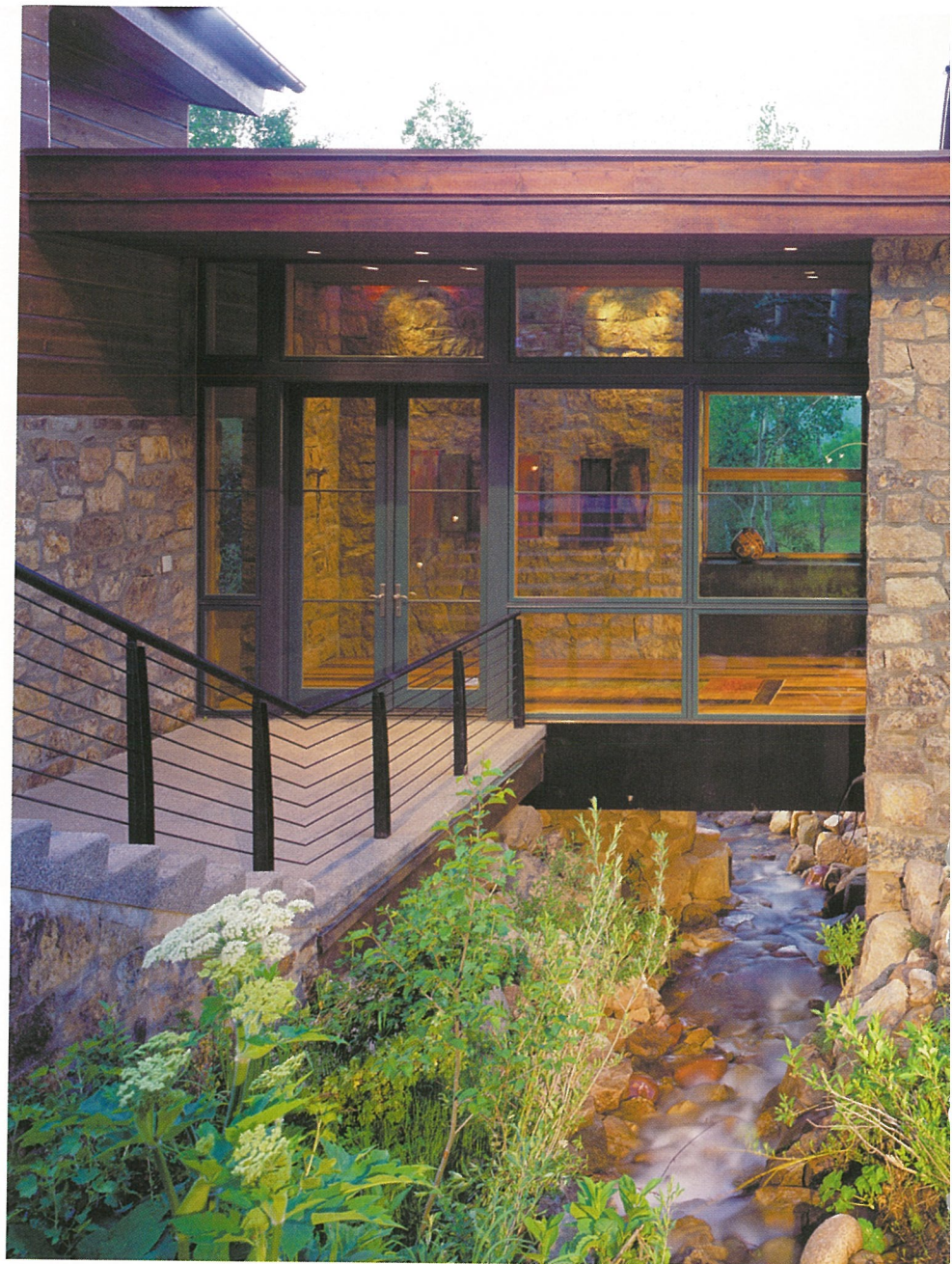
and traditional elements. A design can seem familiar by reinterpreting historical forms with natural materials, yet detailing with an element of surprise. That detail may be layering old and new. For example, a home may consist of natural stone and reclaimed barn wood, but have a surprise with a very clean application of steel and glass. This gives a feeling of old and new, nature and man-made."

Interiors also are echoing this blending of old and new. It began with textured drywall and, often, faux paint to make walls even more interesting. Now, builders and designers are incorporating different materials, such as plastics, metals and recycled colored glass in tiles, Valdez says.

"There's no longer just heavy plaster and greatly detailed, ornamental woodwork. We're seeing cleaner, open spaces. There's new use of materials such as concrete floors, and older materials such as glass or concrete that are new in their application — a layering of old and new like reclaimed stair treads with exposed steel stair structure, or exposed steel beams and columns. It's a lot of different planes and spaces, with the idea of less is more, and within those spaces people showcase their personal goods, such as that favorite rug from Asia."

All of these changes keep quality builders on their toes.

"Ten years ago, if we wanted to build



something in a new method, a contractor might say, 'I've never done that before,' and show a little resistance," Kreig recalls. "Now with all the new materials, contractors are willing to research, test, learn new methods."

Mike Cuthbertson, of R.A. Nelson and Associates, finds that his clients want the latest technology in sustainable building, so he is doubling his staff of about six LEED-accredited employees to meet the demand.

"We're seeing a big shift toward sustainable construction and energy efficiency," Cuthbertson says. "Not

'green' for the sake of being 'green' but for the return that they're going to see on that investment over time."

But Carr offers this insight.

"There's been an extremely swift curve of evolution, leading to a tremendous amount of reclaimed and recycled products. This has led to a whole new level of options, choices and design; now sustainability is synonymous with good design. Yet, if people don't love and appreciate their home, it's not sustainable. The real balance is to connect people with place, nature and today's modern lifestyles in a sustainable way." 🏠



Urban AGENDA

THIS GRAND JUNCTION LOFT REMODEL
COMBINES BIG-CITY ATTITUDE WITH
SIMPLER MOUNTAIN LIVING

In April 2007, Valerie and Kevin Brooks took a second look at a roughed-out condominium in the historic Reed Building of downtown Grand Junction. They'd first viewed this three-bedroom, five-bath property in 2005, but had decided to build a custom home in Redlands Mesa. After working with an architect for months, they were ready to break ground, but Kevin, CEO and owner of eight Big O Tire stores on the Western Slope, had just moved his office downtown. The Reed Building, only two blocks away, haunted them.

BY H. E. SAPPENFIELD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KAREN ENEKEL-COUTU



Valerie Brooks wanted the once-commercial space in downtown Grand Junction to look like a big-city loft with sleek lines. The Brooks kept the vintage wood trim on the windows but gave the area a modern look by wrapping the trim in stainless steel.



W

“We made an appointment to see it again, went to lunch afterward and decided to buy it,” Valerie says of their momentous change not only of residence, but also of lifestyle. “Just before we moved, we were pulling into our driveway and garage, and I freaked out. We’d have one small space in the parking garage. This was a paradigm shift. Then we moved, and it’s been great. Last winter I drove my car once a week.”

Kevin frequently walks home from work for a midmorning latte at the town’s coffee bar. They stroll to their favorite restaurants and shops and have hassle-free seats at events like the Art and Jazz Festival. For holidays, the city does the decorating. The city also shovels snow and tends to landscaping.

Yet Valerie’s vision and artistry in converting their condo into a home that feels like a big-city loft — layered in texture, color and art — is what gives them the greatest satisfaction.

“Valerie decided she wanted it to look like a transplant from New York City, which was fine with me,” Kevin reflects. He didn’t have Valerie’s vision and says “Wow” was the word he used most as the project unfolded.

Local builder Jim Palmer had remodeled their previous home, and Valerie appreciated his attention to detail and workmanship. One of Palmer’s first challenges was to alter the layout of the kitchen. It had an island with the dining room on the other side.

“I wanted this to be a sitting area, where people could relax while we were entertaining, a casual place to pause for a cup of coffee,” Valerie says.

She had ordered a circular leather couch. Palmer penciled its outline on cardboard, then framed a round half wall with stairs leading to a French door opening to the deck.

“I was nervous, because we had to wait ’til the loft was finished, eight months, before we could really see how it all fit,” Valerie says.

This innovation became one of the home’s focal points, a black circular seating area with three white, round tables, and round, red pendant lights echoing the arc above.

“We sit here all the time,” Valerie says. “We rarely eat in the dining room.”

Her memories of partnering with Palmer to create her vision are poignant because midway through construction he contracted pneumonia, which he battled for the project’s duration.

“He never got well. In April 2008, he got septic shock and died,” Valerie says with sadness. “He was exceptional.”

Lofty ideas

Crisp attention to shape, color and texture make this home stunning.

Through historic wooden doors on Main Street, reminiscent of the building’s 1908 construction, lies a thoroughly modern entry of white tiles with the word “loft” spelled in black tiles. The use of tile to mark areas and draw interest, rather than employing area rugs, is a theme of the home. Angled stainless steel shelves store shoes, and a wide staircase, textured with wall-to-wall, raised black zebra-print carpet, invites guests up a story. At the top romp three Italian Greyhounds, sleek, elegant and fraught with personality — embodiments of this home.

On the main floor, 19-inch white ceramic tiles and white walls provide a canvas for the home’s basic elements to function as art. Valerie paid homage to the building’s history by keeping the traditional wood trim, but she wrapped a portion of it in stainless steel. The bay window in the living room showcases it best. The exterior woodwork is wrapped in steel, and the sill is made of rounded, stained concrete. The windows are trimmed in vintage wood. All this is set in an original, red brick wall.

In the kitchen and dining room, the cabinetry has a similar layering of texture for a stunning effect.

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LEFT: The Brooks chose white tile floors and white walls, then layered them with color, texture and art. BELOW: Valerie Brooks ordered the black circular sofa, and local builder Jim Palmer framed a round half wall to fit the size of the sofa. Behind a portion of the wall, stairs lead to a French door, which opens to a deck. PORTRAIT: Valerie and Kevin Brooks couldn't be happier with their loft remodel.

Heather Redden, of Delta Cabinetry Company, recalls Valerie's contemporary vision, a first for the veteran cabinet and kitchen designer.

"Valerie was looking for a zebra wood, something out of the ordinary and striking," Redden says. "KraftMaid had just introduced Tygris Gloss, part of the Venicia line, and I had been looking for something to use it on. This was a perfect opportunity. With everything else being white and stainless,



the tiger print jumps out as a focal point."

Valerie had relocated the dining room around the corner from the kitchen, and she wanted a wet bar to extend the length of one wall. Redden tied everything into the kitchen by extending the cabinetry around the corner.

"By turning the corner, we made the area flow," she says. "Placing the refrigerator in the adjacent corner helped that flow, and the kitchen as well. We stacked shorter cabinets on top of one another to lend a contemporary look as we utilized the height of the ceilings. We also layered some stainless-steel-wrapped doors with a mirrored insert among the wood. In the wet bar area, we suspended the base cabinets above the floor."

Like the windows and trim, cabinetry is treated as art, and Valerie collaborated with Redden on custom designs throughout the home. In the study, cabinetry showcases Lego constructions from the Brooks' son's

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childhood. In the master, they designed nightstands and an armoire that match the chocolate-stained bamboo floors, the home's only wood floors. In the living room, they created shelves and a cabinet of high-gloss aluminum and microdot laminate, giving an otherwise white surface unique texture.

"The texture adds depth to that cabinet," Redden says. "It's amazing what's out there in laminate these days."

The main floor of this 4,200-square-foot home consists of the office, living room, dining room, kitchen, master suite and a doggie suite that includes a canine bathroom and toddler bed with a down comforter the dogs burrow beneath.

The master suite has an earthier feel.

"I wanted the master to feel organic," Valerie says, "so I used stone on the walls and in the shower."

In a moment of inspiration, Valerie seized opportunity in a hole cut by the plumber beneath the wall-mount sinks. She kept the recess, filled it with stones, and illuminated

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The master bathroom has an earthy feel, with stone on the walls and in the shower.



the area from below with a light strip. From this, a grotto-glow uniquely complements the room.

On the lower floor is a two-bedroom, two-bath guest suite with a private entrance and a home theater.

From commercial to cozy

Developer Shane Burton purchased the Reed Building from Grand Junction's Downtown Development Authority and resides there too.

"It was close to falling down," Burton says. "The whole building was pretty much gutted; we had to reinforce it with steel beams. For most of its life the building was a J.C. Penny. The brick is original and so is the façade. The Main Street entrance was added in 1930," Burton says, "when the Brooks' place was the Biltmore Gambling Club. It's been a fun process to see the commercial space get occupied, to see how the building functions, to see it come together." 🏠



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