



Neighborly From the

BY CHARLIE WITZKE

Morningside is an old streetcar neighborhood in the Edina suburb of Minneapolis. The neighborhood is an eclectic mix of modest one-and-a-half- and two-story houses mostly built in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. Styles range from clapboard colonial to stucco Tudor to the occasional ranch house.

Our clients, soon to be empty nesters, wanted to live in a smaller, in-town house. They found a tiny, dilapidated cottage on a 50-ft.-wide lot in Morningside. The house wouldn't do, but its location in this pedestrian-friendly neighborhood near the Minneapolis lakes was perfect.

Our task as the architects of their new house was to create a home respectful of the neighborhood. The house's style, level of detail, materials, and size couldn't look out of place, and the house needed to turn a welcoming face to the street.

We kept the scale of the house compatible with the neighborhood by giving it a very steep (15-in-12) roof, making it look at first glance like a one-story house. Yet there's plenty of room under the roof for a pair of bedrooms and baths on the second floor.

The front elevation is an iconic image of a house: a steep, singular roof with a tall chimney. The simpler the roof, the more memorable it becomes. To help maintain its strong shape, the upstairs bedrooms and baths get their daylight by way of dormers recessed into the roof. They have a lower profile than typical dormers, minimizing their visual impact on the primary roof.

The roof is also kept free of unsightly vents. A continuous, decorative cap (photo left; drawing p. 93) conceals the venting and is also the form that the dormer roofs



A welcoming presence. Finished in stucco, cedar shingles, and wood paneling, this new house looks right at home in a neighborhood of older houses. Its broad porch, iconic roof, and generous bank of windows present a cheerful face to the street. The front porch wraps around the corner of the house, leading to a well-protected entry. Photos taken at A and B on floor plan.

A new home combines privacy, daylight, and durability, and fits comfortably into a traditional neighborhood

Start



A view of the street, but only when you want it. The front porch wraps around the corner of the living room, leading to a well-protected entry. The palette of natural materials leading to the front door is carried into the interior, where walnut floors and rift-sawn oak cabinets set the mood. Diaphanous woven-grass curtains fall into place for privacy. Photo taken at C on floor plan.

echo. The exterior columns are minimal, with just enough millwork detail top and bottom to give them character.

Finding the sweet spot between openness and privacy

On an urban lot, the temptation is to close off the front of the house from the street for the sake of privacy. The result typically limits the amount of daylight reaching the interior and any connection to the outdoors. We took a different approach, providing daylight for the living spaces and developing a strong connection to the front and back yards.

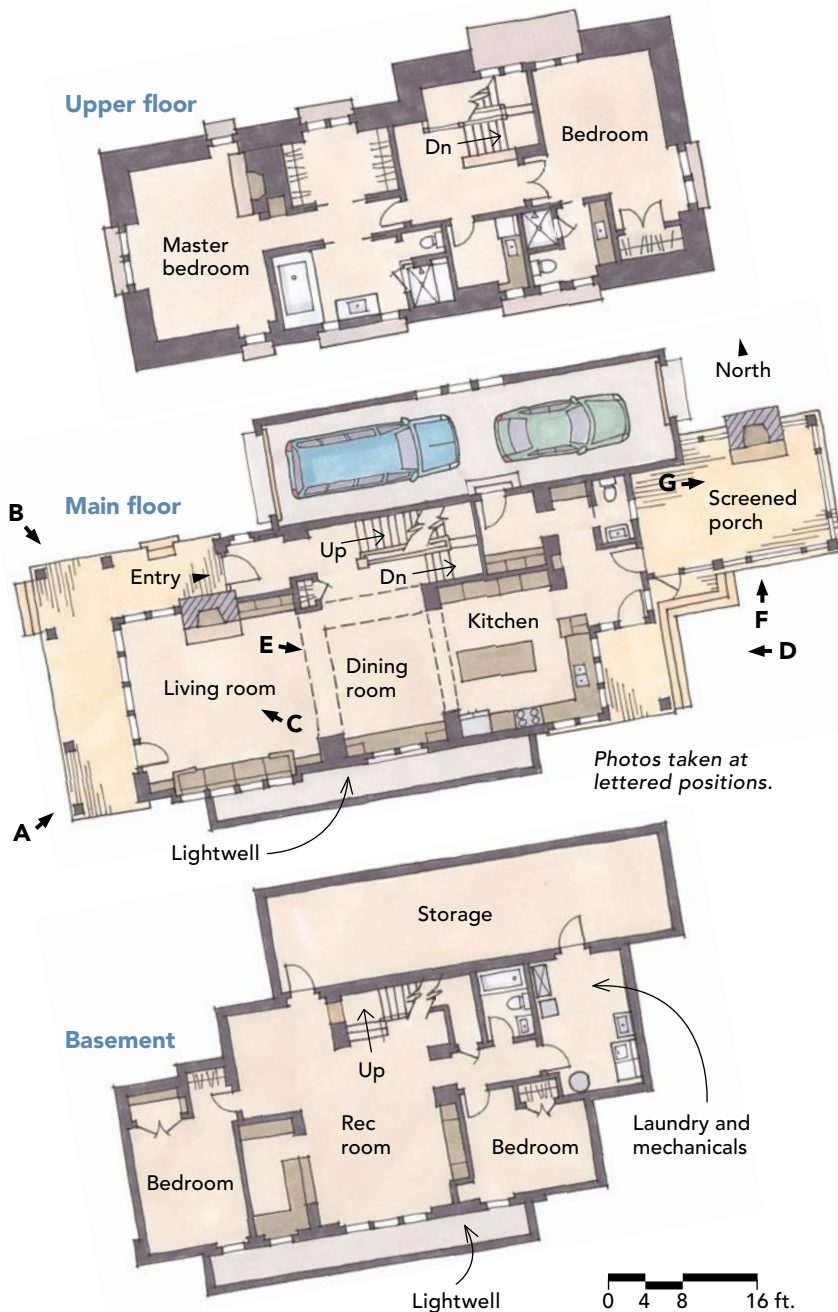
Framed by four columns, the living room is mostly windows. The windows wrap the corner to expand the connection to the outside, opening the room to light from the north and west and to views down the street.

At the opposite end of the house, the kitchen faces east and also has windows wrapping the corner to catch south and first light. They overlook the backyard patio and grilling area (photos p. 92). A screened porch also opens onto the patio. The backyard landscaping and deciduous trees were designed for privacy, and they create a



OPEN TO THE LIGHT AT BOTH ENDS

Big windows at opposite ends of the first floor open onto views of the front and back yards, extending the sense of space. To maximize daylight on this narrow lot, the tandem garage is set back on the north side. The basement-level spaces are daylit by a lightwell, and they are large enough to accommodate a potential live-in caregiver.



parklike atmosphere, which is great either for relaxing with the paper or for entertaining a large party.

Windows at both ends of a long, narrow house are important to extend a sense of spaciousness right through it. When the homeowners want some privacy from the street, they can simply lower the woven-grass blinds (Conrad Shades; www.conradshades.com). They have a great natural feel, one of our goals, and the translucent weave of the grass provides the right amount of screening for privacy without completely closing off the outside.

SPECS

Bedrooms: 4 **Bathrooms:** 3½ **Cost:** \$300 per sq. ft.

Size: Main floor, 1350 sq. ft.; second floor, 1150 sq. ft.

Completed: 2006 **Location:** Edina, Minn.

Architect: TEA2 Architects; Charlie Witzke, principal designer

Interior design: Redpath Constable Interior Design; Katie Constable, interior designer

Builder: John Thomas Custom Homes; Jack Carter, construction manager

An outdoor room off the kitchen. The kitchen overlooks a diminutive porch and the backyard patio. Inside, soffits, dropped beams, and thick plaster columns between kitchen, dining, and living areas frame each space, providing a subtle sense of definition even as the rooms remain open to one another. Photo near right taken at D on floor plan; photo far right taken at E.



The kitchen, dining, and living areas are all open to one another, enabling each to share light and views. The combination of these spaces, along with 10-ft. ceilings and large groupings of windows at both ends of the house, creates an open feel that many larger homes simply don't achieve.

Our clients wanted durable, natural materials that have a sense of warmth and that would age well with heavy use. To that end, we chose character-grade walnut flooring, rift-sawn white-oak cabinetry and trim, and plaster-finished walls. These materials are used throughout the house, giving its interior design a sense of continuity.

Solving the garage dilemma

Early in the design phase, we were challenged by the question of where to put a two-car garage on a narrow lot without destroying the backyard, losing light and views, or overwhelming the front of the house. There was no alley access, and the homeowners decided they didn't want the maintenance of a long driveway leading to a detached garage in the back.

The solution turned out to be a one-car-wide garage that's two cars long (floor plan p. 91). We set it on the north side of the house, several feet back and lower than the entry to minimize its impact on the front facade. This positioning preserved the backyard and resulted in a street-side view of the garage that doesn't compete with the house. □

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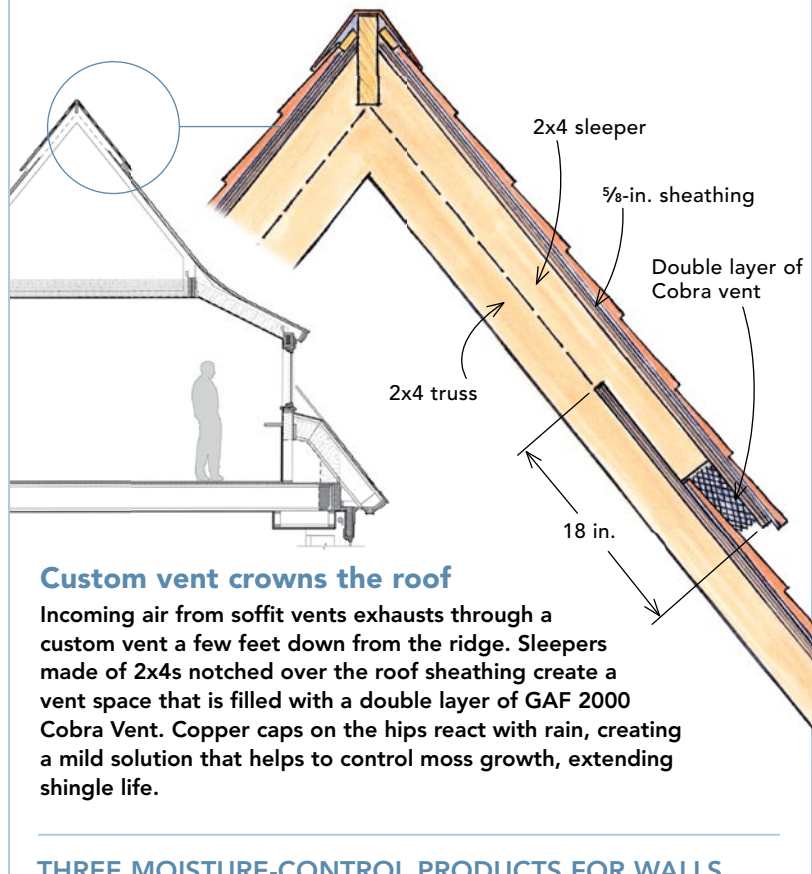


Summer fun in the evenings, too. With the promise of a warm fire to huddle around, screened-porch season is extended on both ends of the calendar. Photos taken at F and G on floor plan.





STAYING ON TOP OF MOISTURE PROBLEMS



Custom vent crowns the roof

Incoming air from soffit vents exhausts through a custom vent a few feet down from the ridge. Sleepers made of 2x4s notched over the roof sheathing create a vent space that is filled with a double layer of GAF 2000 Cobra Vent. Copper caps on the hips react with rain, creating a mild solution that helps to control moss growth, extending shingle life.

THREE MOISTURE-CONTROL PRODUCTS FOR WALLS

Our firm believes that one of the most important ways to build sustainably is to design houses that last. Because water is a house's worst enemy, we used:

- **Cedar Breather**, a woven-plastic mat that creates a 1/4-in. airspace between the roof sheathing and the cedar shingles. The air passing through this space allows the shingles to dry quickly, extending their life. **Benjamin Obdyke Inc. www.benjaminobdyke.com**
- **Sure Cavity**, which creates a 3/8-in. gap behind the stucco. Often called a drainage plane, this gap takes away any water that might pass through the stucco before it reaches the building paper. The stucco is applied with a traditional method of scratch coat, brown coat, and a final finish coat. The finish layer, however, is an acrylic topcoat that can flex with the extremes of Minnesota's seasons and help to prevent cracking. **Masonry Technology Inc. www.mtidry.com**
- **Tuff-N-Dri**, a waterproofing system used on the poured-concrete basement walls. This spray-on flexible waterproofing membrane is used with Warm-N-Dri foundation board applied over it. The foundation board protects the membrane from damage and creates a drainage plane so that water can reach the foundation drains. **Tremco Barrier Solutions www.tremcobarriersolutions.com**

