

A Cozy House



An angular floor plan captures the view
and combines public and private zones

That Likes a Crowd

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Our clients, Gibby and Buz, came to us with a rather strange request. First, they wanted a Craftsman-inspired, private retreat for two that could be expanded into a full-time residence in the future. But foremost, the house had to be able to handle gatherings of 50 or more guests. In short, they needed a cozy, intimate house that also would be a great place for parties.

Starting with the idea that any successful large party is really a collection of small, intimate conversations, we set out to create a variety of settings for social interaction, both indoors and out. We really needed to design two houses: one large, open, and social; the other small and private. The two would have to merge, swapping and sharing characteristics.

A lake and a showy, old tree focus the views

Everyone agreed that the best place on the site for the house would be on a hill that overlooks a small lake with views of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance. A notch in the treeline to the west catches the sunset. Next to the lake, a mature serviceberry tree, known locally as a sarvisberry tree, shows off its snow-white blossoms in the spring against a background of surrounding woodland. We

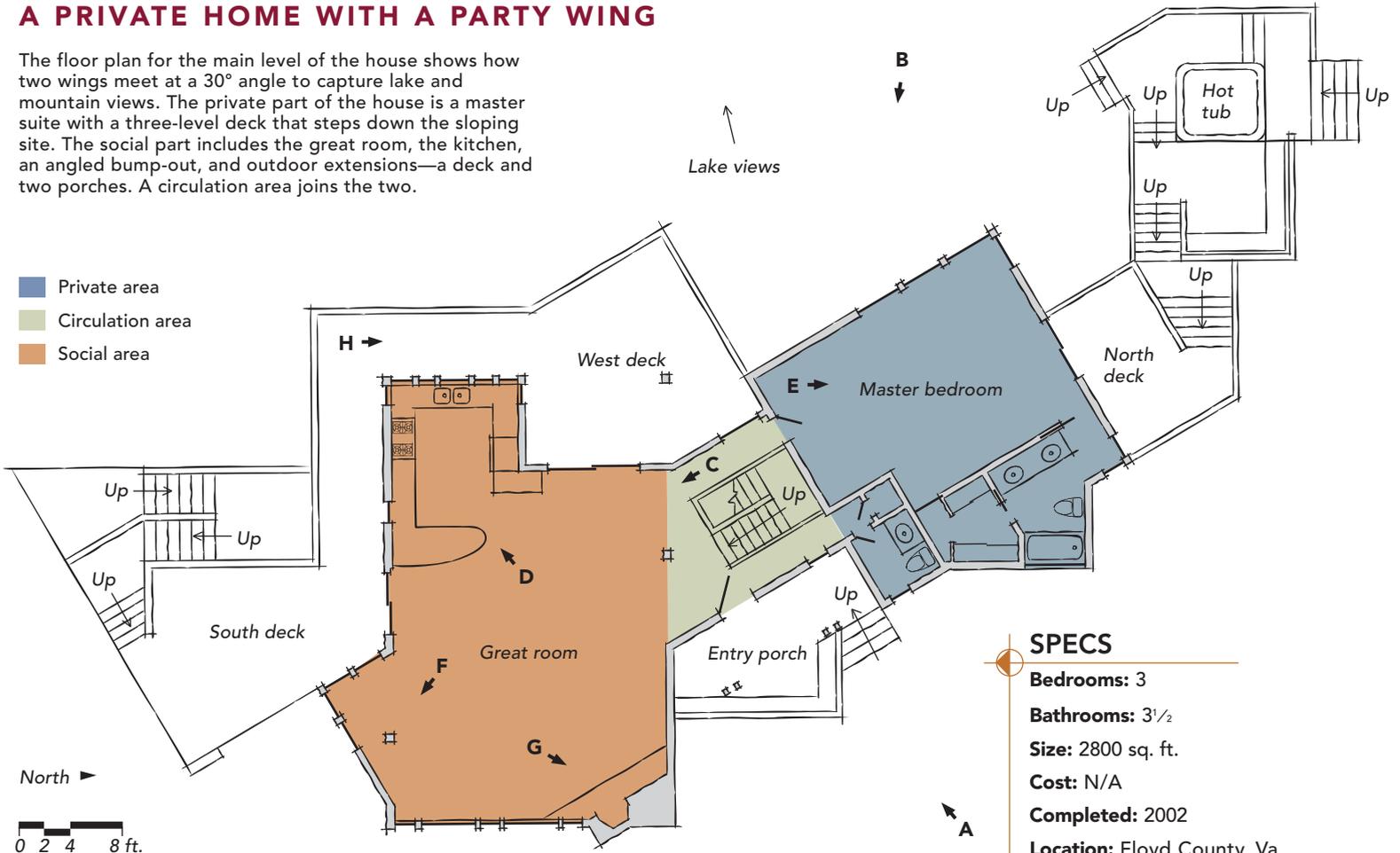


A modest approach. Broad eave overhangs lend a low-slung feel to the house. Photo taken at A on floor plan. The two main areas of the house are angled to face the lake and a large, old sarvisberry tree. Inset photo taken at B on floor plan.

A PRIVATE HOME WITH A PARTY WING

The floor plan for the main level of the house shows how two wings meet at a 30° angle to capture lake and mountain views. The private part of the house is a master suite with a three-level deck that steps down the sloping site. The social part includes the great room, the kitchen, an angled bump-out, and outdoor extensions—a deck and two porches. A circulation area joins the two.

- Private area
- Circulation area
- Social area



Photos taken at lettered positions.

SPECS

Bedrooms: 3

Bathrooms: 3½

Size: 2800 sq. ft.

Cost: N/A

Completed: 2002

Location: Floyd County, Va.

Architect: DesignWorks Construction

Builder: Klockner Construction

A great hall for great gatherings. The centerpiece of the social section of this house is a large, open hall spanned with heavy timber trusses. Many smaller gathering places within the hall include the dining room, kitchen, sitting area around the fireplace, and a sunny angled nook. Photo taken at C on floor plan.



We continued to develop the theme of merging a large social space with a cozy private one

Wake up to the views. An ample and comfortable master suite anchors the private section of the house. Glass doors lead to a series of small, personal decks that step down to a hot tub. Photo taken at E on floor plan.



The kitchen is open for entertaining. A shed roof off the great room covers a kitchen big enough for many people to be in at once. Photo taken at D on floor plan.

maximized these views and opened up the house along the hilltop by merging the two functionally different volumes of the house at a 30° angle. With this angled floor plan, all the major rooms could face the lake, the sunset, and the sentinel sarvisberry.

We oriented the entry side of the house away from the view, giving this side a low-slung, modest façade (photo p. 78). At the top of the entry steps, the windows align to provide a framed glimpse of the sarvisberry through the center of the house. Taking advantage of the sloping site, we opened up the lake side of the house a full two stories (inset photo, p. 79).

A party room joins a private wing

The floor plan evolved to include three distinct zones: a large social area; a cozy, private

area; and a circulation area that joins the two (floor plan, facing page). The great room, with the living and dining areas beneath a vaulted ceiling (photo facing page), defines the social part of the house. A fieldstone fireplace occupies one corner (top photo, p. 83), and two sets of glass doors open onto the surrounding deck. The kitchen opens into the great room and is tucked under a shed roof that also covers a large porch (photo top left).

The private zone is the master suite, a smaller, rectangular wing with its own dramatic view of the lake and private access to decks that step down to a hot tub near grade level (photo top right).

The circulation zone links the public and private spaces. It contains the main entry, the stairway, a hallway, a half-bath, and access to two porches. This space functions both to



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connect and to buffer, keeping the master suite private.

Angled bump-outs and deck spaces

We designed the zones to overlap and penetrate each other, defining the edges with triangular bump-outs. In the living room, the bump-out is a well-lit nook off the larger area (photo right). This room-within-a-room is the most popular spot in the house for everything from morning coffee to small dinner parties.

A second bump-out can be found in the master suite, this time giving the bath some extra room. On the exterior, each bump-out is topped with a gable dormer roof, which by necessity is turned 30° to the main roof.

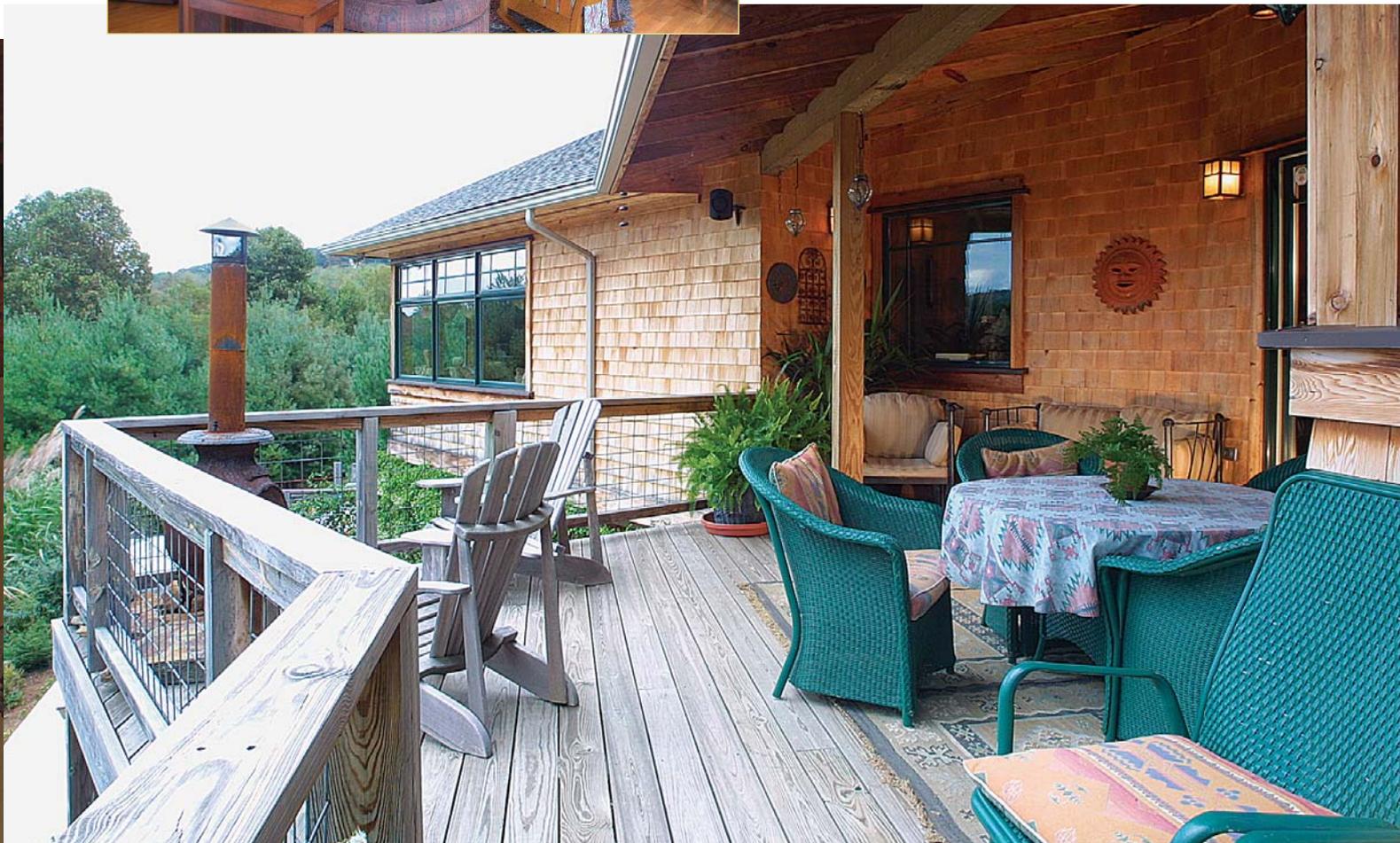
Gibby and Buz had requested easy and un-rushed access from floor to floor, so we worked with the angles to design a series of multilevel decks with built-in benches, which is more friendly than a single, vast rectangular deck with stairs. Altogether, there are at least 10 distinct deck areas for hanging out, most with views of the lake. Deck railings needed to be as invisible as possible, so our economical, low-tech solution was to use 6-ga., galvanized 4-in. by 4-in. wire mesh that is known locally as dog wire (photo facing page).



The best seat in the house. Light fills an angled bump-out off the great hall that serves as an informal dining area or as a spot to sit in the sun and read. Photo taken at F on floor plan.



An angled fireplace completes the theme. The fireplace is turned 30° to the great hall, but it's perpendicular to the nearby bump-out. High placement of windows creates lots of wall space to display artwork. Photo taken at G on floor plan.



Low-tech railings offer high visibility. Guard rails made of wire usually used for dog kennels are strong and nearly invisible to maximize views from the deck. Photo taken at H on floor plan.

Nearly invisible, it installs easily and is sturdy, durable, and code compliant.

Native lumber creates local flavor

Buz and Gibby tried to incorporate as much local material as possible into the house. The large king-post trusses in the great room were made from local red oak by Dreaming Creek Timber Frame. Construction foreman Karl Black milled local ash into the light-colored tongue-and-groove ceiling above the trusses. Locally milled locust made rock-hard, golden-hued flooring throughout most of the house.

Last year, Gibby and Buz invited us to a party where we finally saw the house in action.

Our hosts had set up several small tables for 50 guests in the great hall, and as each course was served, all the guests traded places. By the end of the evening, everyone had had a chance to socialize with everyone else. The house, spacious but not overwhelming, and differentiated but not fussy, provided a perfect, cheerful common ground for all the mini-gatherings. □

Chris Prokosch and Shannon Green are partners in DesignWorks Construction (www.dworksconstruction.com) in Floyd, Va. Photos by Roe A. Osborn, except where noted.