

Modern Victorian

Out-of-the-box design ideas from a new house in Telluride's historic district

BY BRIAN PONTOLILO



EDITOR'S CHOICE

The best design is born of constraints, and this project had a few—it's located in a notorious historic district, on a nonconforming lot, in a flood zone; plus, it needed to house a big family with a big lifestyle.

Needless to say, Arkin Tilt Architects' solutions are ingenious. The house has a traditional Victorian exterior with modern details inside. It has every space the family needs in a tiny footprint. And it's full of sunlight, from the bedrooms tucked under the third-floor roof to the windowless basement.



Telluride, Colorado, may be best known for its ski mountain, which is famous for having some of the best terrain of all North American resorts. But the nearly 9000-ft.-high town is a hot spot in the summer, too, when it hosts a number of music, film, and yoga festivals that draw tens of thousands of visitors. The population of permanent residents is well under 2500 people, though, and the town gets very sleepy very quickly without snow or other entertainment to draw tourists. This is when the village—a charming, former mining town—best reveals its well-preserved history. Telluride’s 80-acre historic district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1961.

Not only is this lot set square within Telluride’s historic district—but that the plans were subject to evaluation by an architectural review commission known for high standards and great expectations—but the site itself is nonconforming. Though it was once approved for a

home, it’s smaller than the allowable minimum size for a new build today. Plus, the lot is located in a flood zone. Architect David Arkin had his work cut out for him when he began designing a new home for returning clients Bernie and Erica Tershy and their three children, a modern family with a very active lifestyle.

“We have a rule that good ideas can come from anywhere,” said David Arkin while reflecting on the project, “We listened to the review committee and the neighbors, and in the end, the limitations turned out to be our friends.” The design was approved by the architectural review commission at the second hearing and offers a compelling balance of traditional forms and new concepts with lots of inspirational ideas for anyone drawn to historic homes or modern architecture. □

Brian Pontolilo is design editor. Photos by the author.



MODERN MATERIALS
Most of the house has historically appropriate lap siding, though fiber cement was used instead of wood. The two-story bay has fiber-cement board-and-batten siding and the bump-out on the back of the house has Ranchwood prefinished Douglas-fir siding. Though these are not traditional materials, these parts of the house read as additions. If this were a period home in Telluride, the architectural review committee would prefer that additions to the original structure appear as such, so these details actually help this new home fit into the historic district. The metal roof, an appropriate modern material in snow country, is also a compromise.



HISTORIC FORM, NEIGHBORLY ROOFLINES

Telluride’s inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places is based on a period of significant development from 1878 to 1913. During this time, most new homes were one- or two-story Victorians. Though not as ornate as many Victorian homes built in this period, they had some common distinguishing characteristics, including steep gable or intersecting gable roofs with wood-shingle roofing, front porches with shed roofs, wood lap

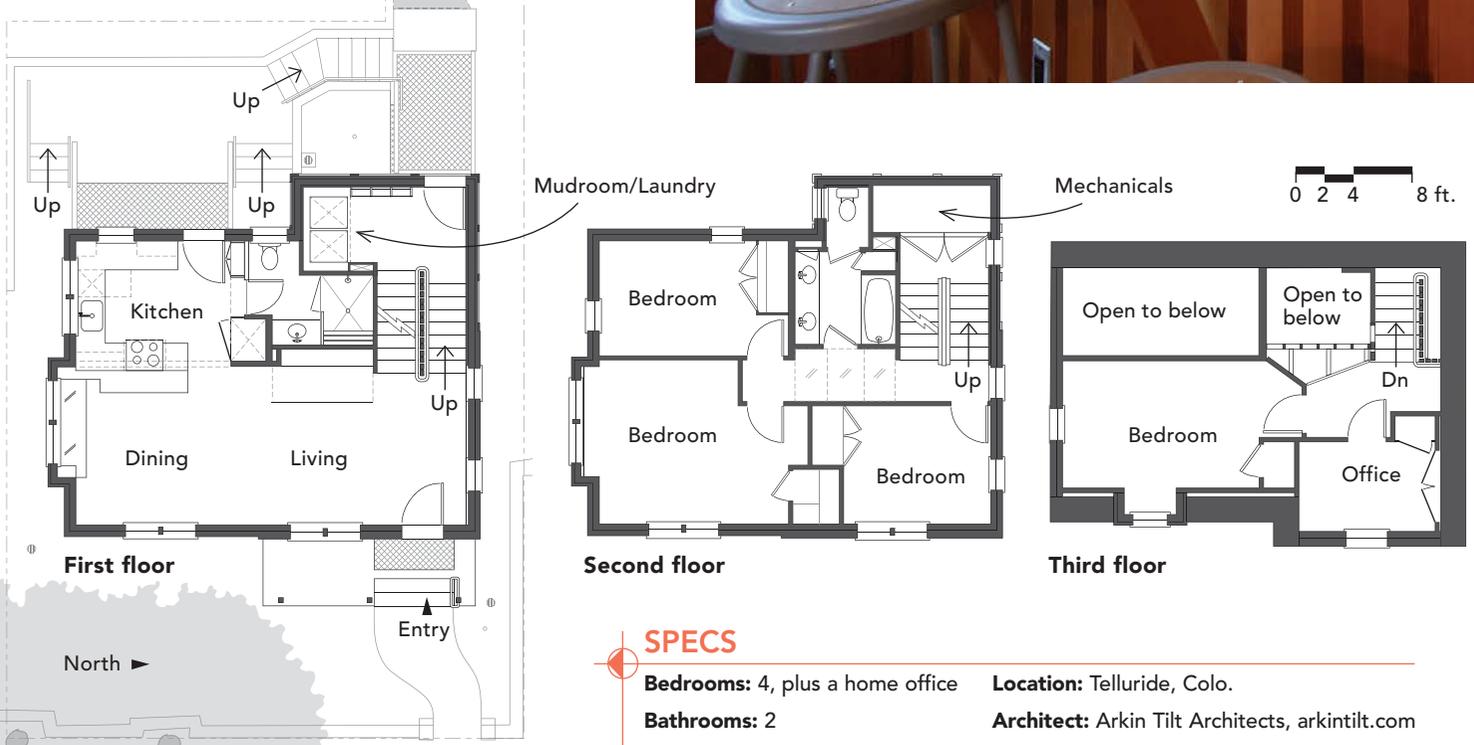
siding, and tall, narrow double-hung windows. When evaluating new homes to be built in the historic district, the review committee looks for sympathetic design, though they are open to variations in form and materials, depending on the circumstances.

The rooflines on this house are a good example. Facing the street, the house appears to have a steeply pitched intersecting gable roof. However, the main gable turns into

a hip at the back of the house. The ridge of the intersecting gable is pulled toward the street so the roof actually has more of a saltbox shape, which is revealed from the side elevation. And part of the intersecting gable roof in the back is clipped with a steeper pitch. These modifications create more useful ceiling shapes for the third-floor bedrooms, while preserving the mountain views that the neighbors have enjoyed for decades.

TINY LOT, MAXED OUT

The flag-shaped lot has off-street parking in an alley behind the house, but the buildable site is a mere 37½ ft. wide by 50 ft. deep—so small that the builder had to install the 2-in. exterior rigid foam inside the walls on the back bump-out to keep the house within the setback. To make the most of the 670-sq.-ft. foundation footprint, the house has three floors with four bedrooms, two full baths, an office, and all of the accessory spaces modern life demands.



SPECS

Bedrooms: 4, plus a home office
Bathrooms: 2
Size: 1750 sq. ft.
Completed: 2016

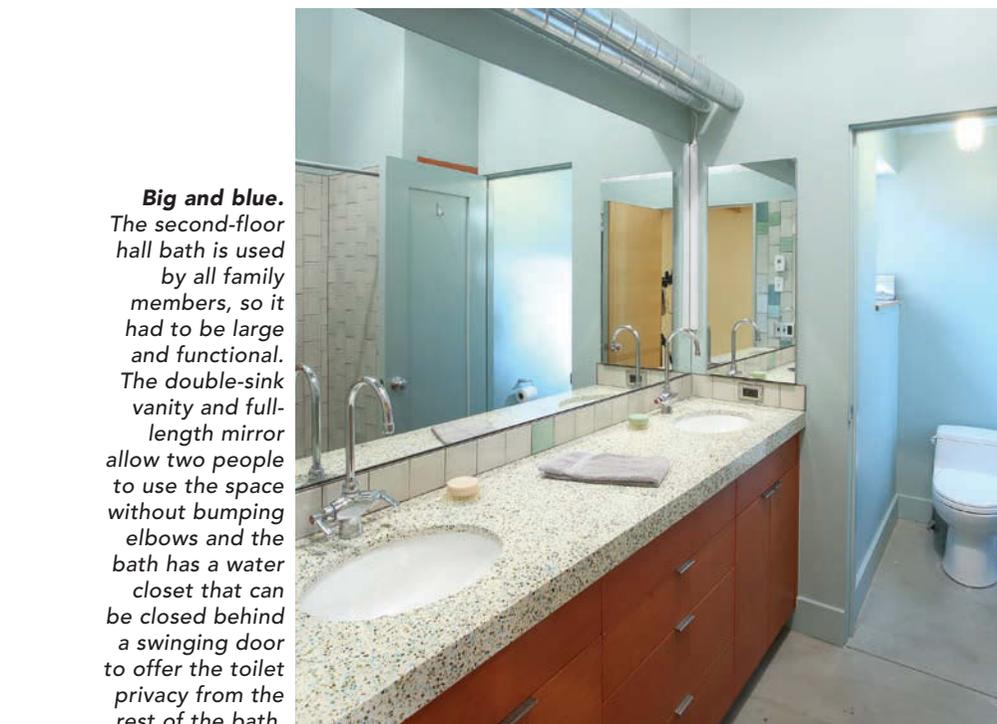
Location: Telluride, Colo.
Architect: Arkin Tilt Architects, arkintilt.com
Builder: Ryan Tougher, tougherconstruction.com



Color in the kitchen. The homeowners wanted some color in their house and the kitchen was a great place to live up. The cabinets are stained a translucent red and the backsplash is yellow subway tile. Both offer just the right amount of contrast to the otherwise light-color walls, translucent acrylic panels, and wood tones used throughout the interior.



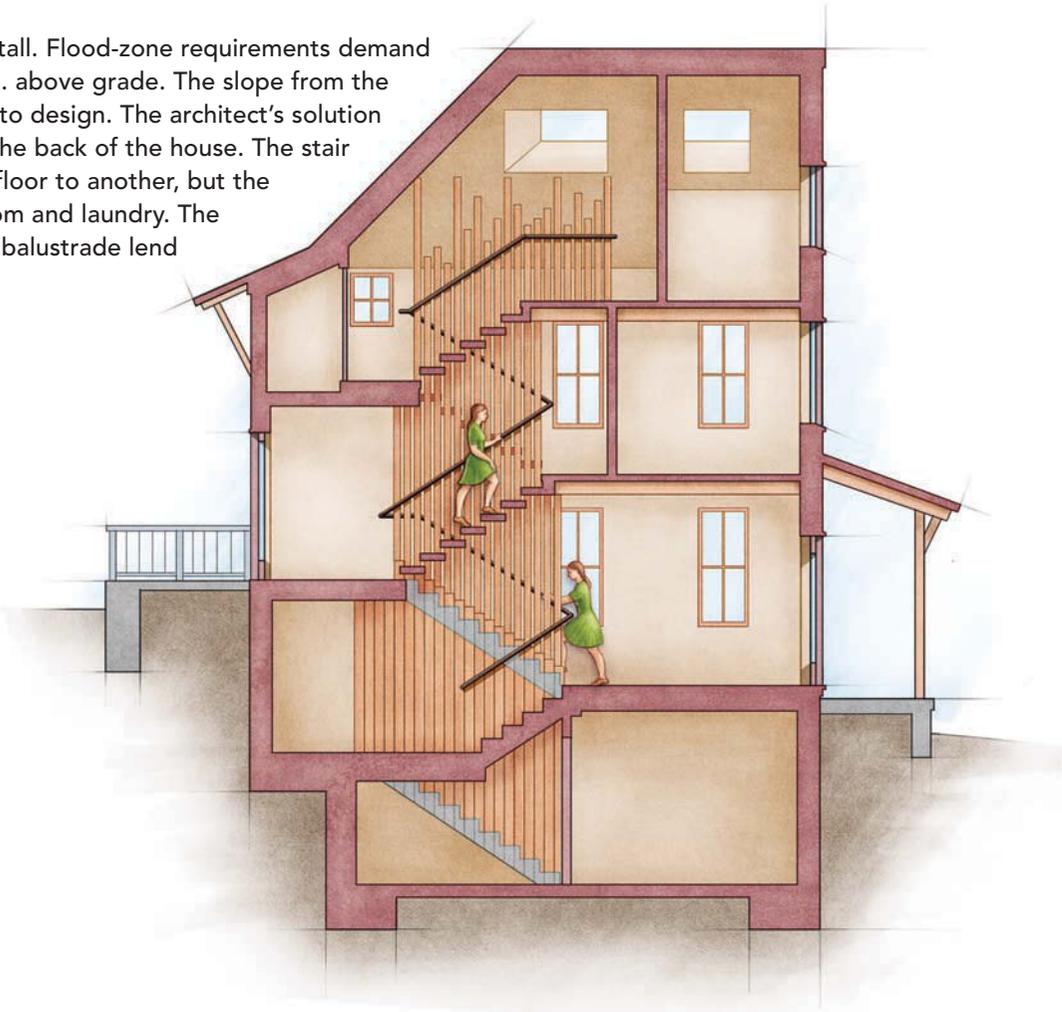
Engineered timber frame. Not only do the Parallam joists and exposed second-story flooring create a modern take on the timber-frame aesthetic, but the assembly takes up less height than a more conventional floor system, which was advantageous for a three-story house in a historic district with ridge-height restrictions.



Big and blue. The second-floor hall bath is used by all family members, so it had to be large and functional. The double-sink vanity and full-length mirror allow two people to use the space without bumping elbows and the bath has a water closet that can be closed behind a swinging door to offer the toilet privacy from the rest of the bath.

NAVIGATING GRADE AND THREE FLOORS

The small lot meant the house had to be tall. Flood-zone requirements demand the lowest finished spaces be at least 3 ft. above grade. The slope from the backyard to the front made this all tricky to design. The architect's solution is a split-level staircase in a bump-out in the back of the house. The stair not only gets the homeowners from one floor to another, but the landings offer utility spaces like a mudroom and laundry. The open riser treads and vertical Douglas-fir balustrade lend to the home's modern style.



Working with acrylic panels BY RYAN TOUGHER, BUILDER

For many details in this house, we used a 1-in. acrylic panel called Acrylite GP, manufactured by Evonik Industries. The net dimension is actually 0.944 in., and it came to us in two sheets—one at 80 in. by 120 in. and one at 48 in. by 96 in. The cost, without delivery and taxes, was \$18.24 per sq. ft. for the larger sheet and \$15.48 per sq. ft. for the smaller sheet.

Our first consideration was how to receive such a large and heavy sheet good—it weighs 5.76 lb. per sq. ft.—and where to stage fabrication. The product scratches easily, so careful handling is a must. Ideally, the fabrication would occur in a woodshop, but we

did not have that luxury. We had to fabricate everything on site.

To make the material easier to move around, we first rough-cut the pieces to size. We used a Festool track saw with an HW 210x2.4x30 TF60 blade. We also slowed the speed of the saw down to about two-thirds of the total RPM to try to minimize the amount of heat that is created during cuts. We had a mixture of baking soda and water in a spray bottle on hand for cooling and lubrication, but found that it was not necessary. (However, if you need to drill clean holes with a Forstner bit, the water solution is definitely required).

We made templates for each detail, the same way one would template a countertop. We laid out the templates, traced the outline, and subtracted $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from the overall size to allow for movement. We cut the panels using the same method described above.

We used a Festool orbital sander with 120-grit paper on the top surface and the exposed edges to recreate the opaque look the architect was after. For the bench and bar, we also used the sander to ease the exposed edges.

For the larger floor panel, we used countersunk #8 wood screws as fasteners and oversized the holes to allow for movement. For the bar top,

we used 3M heavy-duty clear double-sided mounting tape so that there would be no visible fasteners. For the alcove floor panel, we used a combination of the 3M tape and silicone placed on the underside of the baseboard.

Working with the product is very similar to working with wood. I would not say that it would be a great DIY project, though. The guys we had on this project were master tradesmen, each with 20 years of carpentry experience. Also, the building inspector will likely require a structural engineer to sign off on using this material in a structural application, as was the case with the floor panels we installed here.



TRICKLE-DOWN DAYLIGHTING

The homeowners wanted to fill the house with daylight, including the basement, which had to have flood vents instead of windows. While the house has plenty of windows on the exterior walls, the architect decided to bring daylight to the center of the house with a three-story light well. The source is a skylight in the third-floor hallway. From there, light can fill the second-floor bathroom through a translucent polycarbonate panel and the hallway below through an opening in the floor.



Luminous hallway.

Outside the bathroom, the second-floor hallway is full of daylight that comes from above. An acrylic-panel floor keeps the sunshine flowing to the first floor below.

Featuring sunlight.

A subtle veneer-plywood feature wall in the center of the first floor continues the flow of daylight to the basement through an acrylic panel in the floor.