

Family First

A lovely Birmingham new-build is tailored to its active inhabitants // Photography by Jeff Garland

By

Khristi S. Zimmeth December 1, 2020

They liked almost everything about their previous home — its tree-lined street, the neighborhood’s family-friendly feel, and its walking distance to downtown Birmingham. Unfortunately, they were less than crazy about the house itself.

“We bought and renovated our prior home, a 60-year-old ranch, before we had children,” the homeowner explains. “It was on a cul-de-sac, with a beautiful front porch and a very open floor plan, but very little personal space.”

As the family grew, eventually adding three active girls (including a set of twins) to the mix, they continued to struggle with the home’s limitations and realized they needed the house to grow along with them. When it became clear that the lot couldn’t accommodate their needs and that another renovation wouldn’t solve the problems, they decided to look for a lot that would allow them to build fresh and keep what they liked while fixing what they didn’t.

Fortunately, they were able to locate another tear-down ranch in the same neighborhood that had a nice, wide lot that could accommodate the modern yet traditional home they had in mind. Designer Sharon Kory, of Sharon Kory Interiors in Birmingham, was brought in when the project was still in the architectural drawing stage, she says. Inspiration photos from the homeowners helped her and builder Jason Scott, of Scott Quality Homes, translate the couple’s dreams into reality.

Both working professionals, the homeowners wanted the new house to have plenty of space and storage to accommodate their active lives. “Our daughters

play tennis, lacrosse, swim, ski, and play golf," the wife says. "Our families and friends live close, and we keep an open door." The first-floor layout includes an open kitchen and living room, a formal dining room, and two offices — one designed for adults, the other a bright, cheerful homework center. Instead of a traditional mud room, the house has a larger "mud hall" (not shown) that incorporates two mud rooms, a large walk-in closet, a half-bath, and a laundry designed to handle pool towels and athletic wear. A comfortable "teen lounge" with a plenty of natural sunlight and a cathedral ceiling gives the girls a nice space of their own to hang out with friends. Upstairs are four bedrooms, including a master with a workout room that overlooks the backyard pool. There are also three baths and a convenient second laundry room.

Simple yet stylish, the interiors can be described as "soft modern," says Kory, who kept the active family in mind while making design decisions. "We used performance fabrics and kept the palette in neutrals with pops of navy," she explains. "The house has warmth, but feels elegant at the same time." A mix of light and bright white spaces and a few moodier, dark ones ensure visual variety, she says, with the formal dining room offering a transitional space between the two. The casual, contemporary style extends to the outdoor spaces, which include inviting dining and relaxing areas overlooking the in-ground pool.

The homeowners are partial to the expansive heated outdoor loggia and the relaxing master bedroom sitting area. Kory admits to loving the dramatic first-floor powder room. "It started with the stone top, which we all fell in love with," she says. "Then they let me run with it."

While there were things they liked about their old house, the homeowners believe they've found the best of both worlds in their new one. "Our home is incredibly functional and comfortable for our family. We're a mile from downtown Birmingham, where we bike, scooter, run, or walk for dinner, shopping, or ice cream."



It meets the immediate family's needs but also works well for larger crowds. "We've hosted friends and family year-round since we moved in," the homeowner explains. The house has held parties big and small, and wonderful "gatherings of our closest friends. The girls have friends over to swim, play basketball, or watch sports in the main-level lounge, and the heated area outside is comfortable all year." The pool, a priority from the earliest drawings, is open April through October.

The family moved into the home in 2018. The project took approximately a year to build and presented no real challenges, says Kory, who's currently working with the couple to finish the lower level, which includes a secondary kitchen, a sitting area, a game room, and a guest suite. "They're really happy with how it all turned out," she says of the project, which she says was a pleasure to work on. "Luckily, we've all been on the same page from the beginning."

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Sharon Kory, Sharon Kory Interiors, Birmingham, sharonkoryinteriors.com

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