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'Modern urban' in western Shawnee

Family's dream home to be featured on 'design week' tour



Bob Greenspan. Enlarge photo.

The Steiner house, located in the Grey Oaks subdivision in western Shawnee, will be featured on the 2018 Kansas City Design Week "Homes by Architects" tour on April 14. Representatives from Kansas City, Mo. architecture firm KEM STUDIO will be on hand during the tour to discuss the unique home's design and details.

By [Jennifer Bhargava](#)

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Seven-year-old Ian Steiner once told his mom, "living in our house is like being on vacation every day."

His parents and older brother, Isaac, couldn't agree more.

The Steiner residence, located in the Grey Oaks subdivision in western Shawnee, is a far cry from the average house, both in looks and functionality.

Sitting near traditionally beautiful upscale suburban homes, the sleek white house offers a jolting pop of modern urban architecture in the heart of Midwestern aesthetic.

The open-concept structure features five bedrooms and five-and-a-half bathrooms.

Custom colorful, modern art splashes from the walls, offering a glimpse into the family's quirky personality.

A large finished basement houses a playroom, gaming area, workout space and bathroom.

Outside, there is a back deck with a fireplace, which overlooks a biking/hiking trail and lush landscape.

The home's most "resort-like" aspect, however, is the hip-yet-cozy rooftop terrace atop the garage. The large outdoor space features astroturf for mini golf play, plus the family uses the side of the house to project movies.

PHOTO GALLERY



The Steiner Home

The Steiner home, located in western Shawnee, will be featured on the 2018 Homes by Architects tour for Kansas City Design Week. The house was designed by architects at KEM STUDIO. Photos of the house are by Bob Greenspan.

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It's these unusual touches that helped earn the house a spot on the prestigious Homes by Architects tour for Kansas City Design Week next month.

The Steiner residence will be one of four Johnson County architectural gems featured.

For the talent behind the eye-catching house, the placement on the tour is an honor and hopefully, a chance to inspire.

"We want people to realize you can be creative no matter where you live," said Brad Satterwhite, the co-founder and principal architect of KEM STUDIO. "Maybe one day, the Steiner house will be part of the norm, rather than the exception."

The Steiner family's journey to building one of the most unusual houses in Shawnee didn't happen overnight.

It actually started eight years ago when husband and wife, Jaclyn and Casey, bought the empty lot in the brand new Grey Oaks subdivision.

They were already living in another neighborhood in western Shawnee, but they wanted a more spacious home better suited to their lifestyle.

At first, they were going to pick one of the model home designs offered by the Grey Oaks developer, but when the couple discovered hiring an outside builder was allowed, they realized they had the opportunity to create something special.

Both Jaclyn, who works in a law firm, and Casey, an architectural engineer, are big fans of the modern urban architecture prominent in the westside area of Kansas City, Mo. But the couple wanted to stay in western Shawnee, an area they consider peaceful and picturesque.

When it came to selecting an architecture firm to bring their dream to life, Jaclyn didn't have to think twice. She knew exactly who to call.

Years ago, while serving on the board of directors for the Mattie Rhodes Center, she had met Satterwhite on a project. She was mesmerized by his work and vowed if she could work with KEM STUDIO one day, she would.

So, she did.

It turned out to be a perfect fit.

"The family had a positive energy we were instantly drawn to," said Satterwhite. "We're very serious about the work we do but we don't take ourselves too seriously. We got the same vibe from them and it was fun."

Headquartered in the stockyard district of the West Bottoms, KEM STUDIO is an award-winning firm that blends architecture with industrial design.

Although the firm has done projects in Johnson County before, the Steiner house was its first one in a more rural suburban environment, which made the experience a fascinating one, said Satterwhite.

When the architects met with the couple, they kept an open mind and blank slate.

"We didn't go in with preconceived notions because a house is one of the most personal architectural structures there is," Satterwhite said. "This was their opportunity to enhance their lifestyle and create something unique to their needs."

And the architects embraced the family's unconventional suggestions.

"She (Jaclyn) would call and say, 'I have a crazy idea' and I'd say, 'yes, let's absolutely put a slide inside your house,'" said KEM STUDIO architect Craig Alexander, with a laugh.

That slide, located next to the main staircase, now serves as a swift way for the Steiner boys to go downstairs and it also functions as a makeshift laundry chute for busy mom Jaclyn.

"The adults need their space, but they still want to be around their kids, so the flow allows the family to be together but not on top of each other," said Satterwhite, of the home's layout. "They are a family that has a lot of fun and I think this house reflects that dynamic and embraces it."

The home also features sustainable elements, such as high efficiency furnaces and LED lighting. It was also oriented on the lot for specific solar and shading angles, to help heat and cool the house throughout the four seasons.

While the 2,950 square-foot house makes an artistic expression, Jaclyn emphasizes it's a home before anything else.

"This house was built for living," she told the Dispatch. "People come inside and they don't want to touch anything, but we want our guests to make themselves at home. This is our space for our friends and family to relax with us. And with two boys, this house has survived our test. There's nothing to break."

Her favorite part of the house is the rooftop terrace.

"It's been fabulous and the privacy up there is what I love the most," she said. "Whenever I step outside, it's freeing; it's just you and the sky. You're elevated and your eyes go straight up."

Having an urban style house in the middle of the suburbs can be unnerving though.

Since the day construction began in the spring of 2014, the home began drawing curious onlookers.

Now that the family is all settled in their home, it's common to find strangers in cars pulled into their driveway, taking photos with smartphones, or have people drive by slowly. Sometimes people will knock on the door, asking to take a look inside. Other times, real estate agents will call, asking if the family is ready to sell (they're not).

The Steiner family built their home to suit their needs now and for the future, because they're here to stay.

To ease curiosity, they often host neighborhood parties.

"We love Shawnee because it has a small-town feel," Jaclyn said. "We wanted to bring that feel here to this neighborhood, especially since we didn't know each other at all."

She's hoping the upcoming homes tour will satisfy other intrigued minds as well.

The self-guided tour will take place 1 to 4 p.m. on April 14.

Tickets are \$30.

Other Kansas City Design Week events include a Lego Serious Play, Applied Empathy Lab and Art Deco Lettering Workshop, among several other lectures and meetups.

The tour, however, is one of the most popular events.

And if you're interested in tickets, you should act fast.

"People love to look at other people's homes and see how they live," said Kristen DaMetz, the communications director for AIA Kansas City, which helps put on Design Week. "It sparks ideas and shows them ways to be creative."

For ticket information, visit kcdesignweek.org.

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