



HUNGRY NECK

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usable outdoor space. A narrow concrete staircase rises from the city sidewalk to the courtyard.

Friendly, indigenous exterior materials also temper the house's decidedly Modernist form: North Carolina cypress, stained a warm honey hue, complements recycled blue-gray roofing slate from an old demolished home in a nearby Raleigh neighborhood. A sustainable material, the roofing slate eliminates the need for painting.

The house addresses the sidewalk at the same distance as neighboring houses with a 15-foot setback. Floor-to-ceiling windows on the lower level engages the neighborhood while high clerestory windows on the upper level provides privacy for the personal spaces there while allowing natural light to fill the bedrooms.

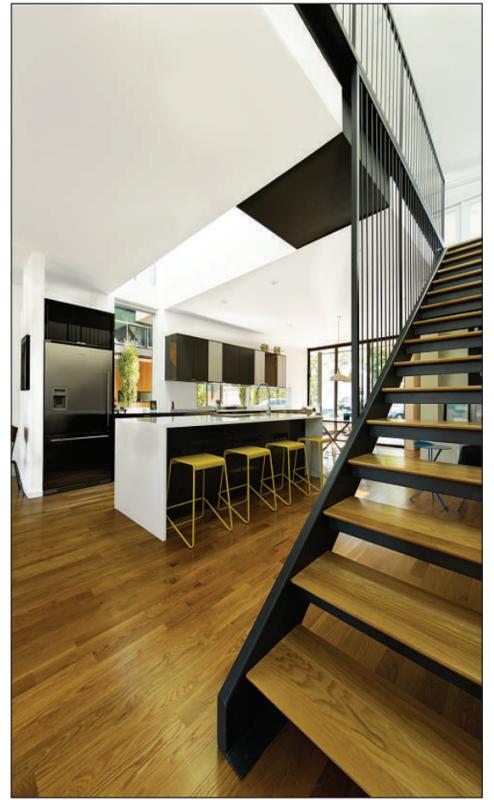
The open floorplan maximizes interior volume and ensures an abundance of natural light in the core of the slim house from a four-foot by 20-foot skylight. Strategically placed operable windows allow natural ventilation to cool the house during fair weather months.

Beyond the front living

space, the kitchen/dining area occupies the double-height core of the house. At the back of the kitchen, a large glass door literally opens the interior to the exterior and extend the living space outside beneath the shed roof's 14-foot-deep overhang.

The RACo-fabricated open steel staircase accommodates vertical circulation. The same black steel railings trace the hallway on the second floor, which is open to views of the lower level. Crisp white walls and gleaming wood floors throughout the house are a serene backdrop for the Johnstons' minimal Modernist furnishings and art.

What do the Hungry Neck folks think since these Modernist houses moved into the neighborhood? According to Johnston, they not only approve, but the older folks have commented on how much they enjoy hearing the sounds of young children playing outside again — a sound they haven't heard in more than 30 years.



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SMART

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the excitement drains away. Then you may have to sharply discount the house to get it sold, Taylor says.

If you're at the lower end of the price range in a neighborhood with widely varied properties and many large homes, she says you should be especially careful to hit the price target correctly on the first try.

When comparing your modest home with a larger one with sumptuous features, make sure you and your agent adjust for the difference in amenities as well as size.

Make the appearance of your front yard a priority.

Though the yard in front of your modest property may lack the grandeur of the grounds around other nearby homes, you'll still benefit significantly from landscape upgrades, Nash says.

Consider hiring a landscape designer to create an overall plan for your yard, em-

phasizing blooming plants. Then to save money, do your own installation of the trees and shrubs included in the plan.

Also, make sure all your greenery, old and new, is pruned below window level so as not to hide the intrinsic beauty of your place.

Focus on fine detailing for minor upgrades to your interior.

Realtors are understandably reluctant to recommend major renovation work, such as the addition of a full family room to a house that has only a small den. That's because sellers often don't recoup the cost of major improvements, even in a fancy neighborhood.

But Nash says you can expect to be well compensated for money outlays on quality interior improvements.

"Though your house is small, top-grade detailing gives potential buyers visual clues that you fit into the neighborhood. Perceptive purchasers appreciate fine moldings, well-chosen paint colors and specialty wallpaper," he says.

You'll probably also want to steer clear of the painter offering the lowest bid. When it comes to painting, preparation is more important than price. To obtain a superior job, the painter should do extensive preparation of walls and trim.

"A superb paint job can iron out lots of flaws," Nash says.

Zero in on your floors.

Many brand-new homes still feature wall-to-wall carpet, especially in bedrooms. But Nash says an increasing number of buyers, including many young millennials, favor hardwood floors.

"Hardwood is architecturally elegant and conveys good taste. In contrast, wall-to-wall carpeting seems retro and tired," he says.

Nash urges sellers who already have hardwood floors to consider getting them refinished. Those living in prestige communities may even wish to replace wall-to-wall carpeting with new hardwood in parts of their property that are highly visible.

Consider hiring a home stager or an interior designer.

Clearly, sellers have the best intentions when trying to choose and arrange furnishings in a way that best shows off their property. But as Nash says, few sellers possess the experience and skills to create the best possible look.

One way to enhance your home's appearance is to hire a professional home stager recommended by your listing agent. Or heed the advice of Nash and engage an interior designer for an hour or two's worth of advice on furniture arrangement and paint colors. One source for referrals is the American Society of Interior Designers (asid.org).

"For that small house in an elite neighborhood, a minor makeover can make a world of difference to your success as a seller," Nash says.

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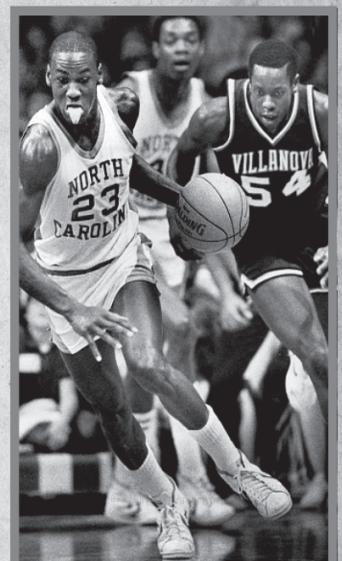
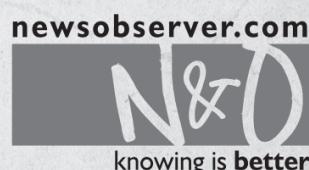
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