



Forever HOME

By Julie Catalano
Photography by Matthew Niemann

For new homeowners in North Central San Antonio, it was a giant step — their first custom build. They wanted a timeless, classic look with clean, contemporary lines, a sleek yet comfortable interior and a place to spend the rest of their lives.



To give the young family their home of a lifetime, a San Antonio project team paid scrupulous attention to detail from the ground up: Debbie Baxter ASID, RID, owner and principal of Baxter Design Group, Inc.; builder Lisa Nichols, founder and owner of Nic Abbey, Luxury Homes; architect James Rahe; and landscape architect John S. Troy.

On the exterior, a combination of chopped limestone, smooth cut limestone, stucco and brick accents form a natural beige palette. “We presented a number of samples to get the limestone façade exactly the way the architect wanted it,” says Nichols, “to where the grout was smeared but not too much. There is a specialized technique for that, and it had to be just right. We also used integral color blend stucco to give an older look to a new exterior.” The porch flooring and entry feature honed limestone in Café.

Inside, Baxter addressed the heart of the home — kitchen, adjacent family room and breakfast room. “They both love to cook,” she says. “He does more grilling in the outdoor kitchen, and she is definitely a cook.” Quartzite in Sea Pearl brightens

the island, countertops and full-height backsplash. Appliances include a Viking® range, oven, microwave and vent hood, and a Thermador® convection warming drawer. There is a Wolf® in-wall coffee system, a U-line® undercounter wine refrigerator, separate refrigerators by Sub-Zero® and a Scotsman® Gourmet icemaker. Custom cabinets are painted in Benjamin Moore® in Classic Gray. Glass pendants over the island are from Lighting Inc.

Many of the furnishings throughout the home are custom-made by Baxter Design Group. Barstools at the kitchen island are custom walnut with white leather upholstery. The breakfast room dining table is also custom walnut, with chairs in black molded plastic from Donghia.

In the adjacent family room, a custom-built sectional upholstered in durable indoor/outdoor linen balances a floor-to-ceiling custom wall cabinetry unit painted in Sherwin-Williams® Night Owl. A hint of how Baxter used color in the house is in the family room artwork by San Antonio painter Waddy Armstrong. “The homeowners really wanted a neutral palette but as we dove deeper into furnishings, rugs and fabric, she understood the need to warm up the expansive space. She loves





blues and greens with touches of red and coral.” Flooring throughout the lower level is rift and quartered select white oak with a custom finish that was applied on site.

The furniture in the opulent formal living room is “a nod to midcentury modern,” says Baxter. “A little low slung, which is why I needed the batik-patterned cotton drapery and linen sheers to go all the way to the top of the window.” The grand space needed a large rug to float the furniture on top — a pair of linen sofas, a walnut side chair in rich blue velvet and walnut and brass coffee table with glass insert. Accent pillows pick up the gold in the striking painting. “The room was pretty much designed around that painting,” says Baxter “The homeowners acquired it on their honeymoon in Asia.” The fireplace surround is limestone in Fior Di Bosco.

The formal powder room is a luxe space with tone-on-tone aubergine Jim Thompson wallpaper, a fond reminder of the homeowners’ visit to Thompson’s studio. The base of the vanity is a cabinet from Italy custom-made into a vanity by the Nic Abbey team, with a Carrara marble top from Delta Granite. Iron and brass sconces are from Urban Electric Company.

Another half-bath is equally striking but in a fun and colorful way. Floor-to-ceiling concrete tile from Sabine Hill features shades of cobalt and a geographic pattern inspired by its Catalan origins. A practically indestructible Silestone® counter sits atop a custom vanity.





Plush and inviting, the master bedroom provides a soothing respite, with a custom-designed bed in gray brushed cotton and wall sconce reading lights in bronze with linen shades. Next to the bed, commissioned artwork by the designer’s son. A custom-sized rug by Tufenkian in 100 percent wool is luxurious underfoot, while a wood-planked ceiling soars overhead. By the window, Baxter chose linen for two swivel armchairs. “Linen has really come a long way in the last few years,” she says. “People love linen and so manufacturers have worked hard to make them more stable and soil-resistant.”

“The homeowners definitely didn’t want a white-on-white bath,” says Baxter of the spacious master bath, selecting locally made natural walnut cabinets for warmth topped with a marble waterfall counter. The heated bathroom floor consists of a linear marble mosaic that runs through white marble floor tiles. The homeowners wanted a metal sculptural lighting fixture over the tub, and a motorized Conrad window covering provides privacy tub-side.

The back-hall mudroom is a multipurpose room. Serving as a homework room and home office, there’s enviable, ample storage from custom cabinetry and built-in cubbies, and white quartz countertops provide craft space for the kids. Flooring is 18” x 24” honed Café limestone from Alamo Stone.

Throughout, the home includes energy efficient features. Nichols installed a Rinnai tankless natural gas water heater with recirculating pumps, a whole house water filtration system and a highly efficient Trane air conditioning system. Foam insulation, aluminum clad windows by Lincoln and specialty steel windows by Rehme® form an ultra-tight seal. A Lutron® lighting system controls indoor/outdoor lighting, providing a level of safety and energy savings.

Baxter concludes that the success of the project can be attributed to the great collaboration between the design/build team and the homeowners. She adds, “They wanted a home that would grow and change with the family needs, to raise their children and eventually visiting grandchildren. They are going to be very happy in this home for years to come.” ♦

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