



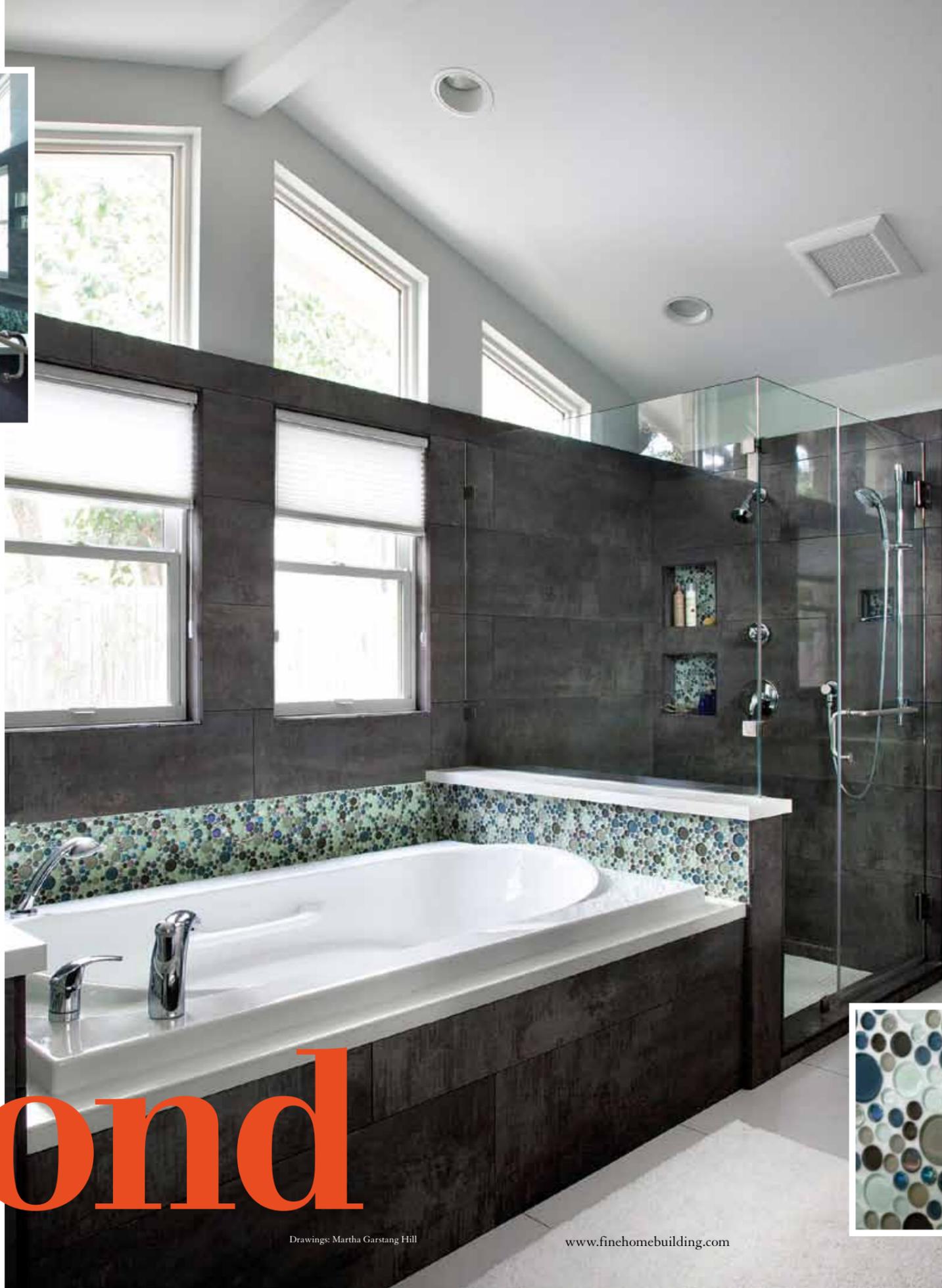
A soothing bathroom takes shape in a 480 sq.-ft. master-suite addition

BY PAUL DeGROOT

As it happens, the home Jen and Pierre bought had been recently remodeled. The home's location near town and great schools was hard to beat. Mature trees filled the big yard. However, it didn't fit their own needs well in several areas, including the master suite.

The master bedroom opened directly off the bustling living room and kitchen, making a peaceful rest or a quiet read impossible. With no alcove or hallway as a buffer, the bedroom door was within five easy steps of the stove. When the door was open, you could plainly see into the bedroom while snacking at the kitchen counter. If the bathroom door was open, it was even possible to see the master-bath tub from the dining table. And the troubles didn't stop with layout.

A poorly pitched drain line below the slab caused the shower and tub to back up occasionally. It's no surprise that Jen and Pierre chose not



PRIVACY, PLEASE

The old master bedroom opened to the busy living room. With doors ajar, it was possible to see from the dining table into the bedroom and bath. Converting the old bedroom into an office and building into the backyard solved space and privacy problems. A short hallway links, and separates, the office and bedroom. Moving the closet to an interior position freed the exterior wall for the new bathroom, where windows are essential. Pocket doors from the bath to the closet allow for circular flow and keep morning fender-benders to a minimum.



Bed, Bath, and Beyond

Reflecting the light. Centering the tub and windows on the exterior wall with a clerestory above delivers lots of daylight to the room. Mirrors opposite the windows spread the light farther and enlarge the space (inset photo facing page). Using frameless glass to enclose the shower makes it as invisible as possible. Black grout gives the wall tile a dry-stack appearance. Playful bubbles of glass surround the tub as an accent.

Sink and counter cast as one. Although it appears to hang off the wall, the vanity cabinet is installed with a deeply recessed toe kick. You can't see it, but it allows the cabinet to support the concrete countertop and sinks. A 24-in.-deep cabinet leaves ample room behind the sink to mount a faucet without crowding the backsplash. Setting back the banks of drawers that flank the vanity gives the cabinet a furniturelike quality.



to fix the tub motor when it broke: The installer entombed it behind tile with no access panel.

Move the bedroom first

When they could stand it no longer, Jen called to see if I could improve their situation. Luckily, there was plenty of room to expand into their backyard.

We agreed that extending a new master suite into the yard, though expensive, was the only cure. Placing the bedroom outboard gave it three exterior walls and abundant windows, perfect for natural ventilation and balanced light. A concrete patio stood in the way, but no sobs were heard when the Bobcat dug it up. To the contrary, the addition gave me the opportunity to design better outdoor-living space right outside the living room where it was needed most.

We all agreed that sloped ceilings in both bedroom and bath were must-haves, mimicking the vaulted ceiling of the living room, a handsome feature from an earlier remodel. Boosting the feeling of airiness in the bedroom, I used 9-ft.-tall walls to raise the eaves above those surrounding the 8-ft. walls of the original construction. The old bedroom became an office and library and created a transition zone between the living room and master suite.

I reshuffled the deck on the old closet and bathroom space. None of it was worth saving, and moving walls is relatively easy when there's attic space above to hide headers and beams. I moved the closet to an inland position so that the new bathroom could run lengthwise along the existing exterior wall. I gained extra length by stretching the bath 50 in. beyond the old slab line. Doing so afforded the wide, low-pitch vault and high clerestory windows that I sought to replicate the windows and ceiling of the new bedroom.

It's all about the tub

When space is tight, I try to talk folks out of having a big tub in their bath because it hogs lots of floor space and is often used infre-

Northern lights. The vaulted ceiling and north-facing windows in the new master bedroom recall those in the existing living room. North glazing in Austin's air-conditioning climate is a perfect way to scoop up light without too much solar-heat gain.



Beyond. Seen on the right, the new master bedroom extends into the backyard with a roofline and high windows similar to those in the existing living room. A new patio links the indoors and the beckoning lawn.



quently. When there is plenty of room, though, it's a rare client who doesn't want me designing both a tub and shower into the mix. It's a no-brainer in such cases that the tub be positioned below windows. There isn't a better use of the exterior-wall space, and extra daylight in a bath is always welcome. Having a vaulted ceiling in this bath made it even more obvious that the tub and its windows would be centered on the outside wall.

Pierre did his homework and found a tub for serious relaxation: A BainUltra, model Amma 7242, sporting a turbine motor to push heated air through 58 jets. I placed the 72-in.-long tub below double-



Frosted glass conceals the toilet. The homeowners were willing to sacrifice some privacy to gain a water closet not claustrophobic to use.

hung windows so that fresh air could enhance the bathing experience on mild days. For privacy, Jen opted for pleated window shades, matching those in the bedroom, over obscured glass. When down, the shades block views inward while allowing muted daylight to pass.

The drop-in tub rests on slabs custom-made by John Newbold, a local expert in glass-fiber reinforced concrete. Extremely dense and fine-grained, his concrete work is a beautiful, durable alternative to natural stone for about the same cost. The raised ledges on each end of the tub are topped with the same concrete and are perfect for shampoo bottles and coffee mugs. Jen and Pierre chose a bone-white color for the slabs so that the glass tile could be their main accent in the room. Directly surrounding the tub is a band of circular glass tiles evoking images of stones worn smooth by a clear, cool stream. Large glazed tiles in earthy browns extend up from this band to the sills of the clerestory windows and clad the tub platform as well.

Not-so-public toilet

This is the first time I've used glass panels for a water closet. Although it seems odd at first, it's akin to a toilet stall in a public restroom, but with frosted glass for the panels and door. The owners wanted visual privacy, yet didn't want a dim, claustrophobic water closet hemmed in by solid walls. Frosted glass lets light through, making the stall feel bigger and less confining. This sense is reinforced by the open-air top. While an opaque partition between the tub and toilet would yield more privacy, we agreed that it would detract from the openness conveyed by the vaulted ceiling. Book-ending the tub with the glass shower, the glassed-in water closet is the answer for this particular room and this particular family.

Vanity flair

Two sinks form a vanity across the aisle from the tub. Molded and poured integrally with the countertop, the 8-ft.-long slab of glass-fiber concrete is monolithic magic. A cabinet with flush-fitted doors and drawers supports the heavy concrete. I deeply recessed the cabinet toe kick to lend the appearance of a floating vanity while still carrying the substantial weight to the floor. Varying the cabinet depth on the ends helps to ease walking space around the corners, but mainly, I just think it looks better. The drawer banks on the ends are 21 in. deep. I specified a 24-in. depth for the sinks, which leaves plenty of space for mounting faucets. The extra inches around the faucet make cleanup easier and give more room for personal items.

I picked rift-sawn white-oak veneer for the cabinet and ran its tight linear grain pattern horizontally. We finished it in a midnight espresso stain to mimic the tone of the owners' bedroom furniture. The dark wood sandwiched between the white floor tile and countertop is a dramatic contrast. Borrowing from the tub surround, the circular-glass-tile backsplash gives a dash of color and character. Above that,



big frameless mirrors reflect light from the windows opposite them. Behind each sink, the mirror is actually an M Series recessed medicine cabinet from Robern. The mirror glass is set off from the wall by 1/2 in., forming a finger pull along the edges for easy opening and no glass smudges. The center mirror is fixed to the wall on spacers to make it flush with the medicine cabinets. Always a stickler for excellence, contractor Eric Harrison saw to it that this detail and the dozens of other particulars of this project were carefully executed. □

Paul DeGroot is an architect in Austin, Texas. Find him at degrootarchitect.com. Photos by Ryann Ford.

Notable elements

Concrete Newbold Stone; newboldstone.com • **Wall tile** Porcelanosa Shine Dark; porcelanosa-usa.com • **Accent tile** Porcelanosa Moon Glacier Metallic Cremas • **Floor tile** Porcelanosa Nieve Nature • **Medicine cabinets** Robern M Series; robern.com • **Glass hardware** C.R. Laurence Co.; crlaurence.com