



# A Stylish Sense of Place

With selective details and design elements distilled to their essence, a Greek Revival custom home rewrites history in a neighborhood that celebrates the past.





THIS PHOTO | Square columns, symmetrical windows and doors, and exposed rafters are common to the area's Greek Revival, vernacular style.  
OPPOSITE | A walled courtyard provides a private outdoor escape at the side of the home.









It's one thing to design a house but quite another to build a home. For Atlanta architect Lew Oliver, the distinction crystallized after a 1985 visit to Seaside, Florida, a town that helped spawn the New Urbanism movement. There, he realized, "Great architecture in the wrong setting doesn't mean anything—it's all about creating a sense of place."

Creating a sense of place is the essence of the New Urbanism philosophy. This approach to community planning, which is also called Neo-Traditional Development (see "Fitting In" on page 78), promotes a return to neighborhoods designed more for people than automobiles. These are places where design encourages walking; where there may be a town center with a café or boutique shops; and where front porches—rather than front-loaded garages—proliferate.

This was the right backdrop for the smart three-story home and development Oliver designed for Hedgewood Properties in Woodstock, Georgia. Located within a work/play historic area called Woodstock Downtown, the home's architecture had to complement the neighborhood, be creative, and make efficient use of a small lot. "Simplicity in design is important. There is a lot of visual drama gained when you create simple objects and stick them together," Oliver says.

Oliver's pared-down adaptation is a "vertical version" of a classic Greek Revival home with details edited down to their

**LEFT** | Horizontal 1x8 boards on the wall and striated granite slabs on the fireplace surround add texture to the home.

**ABOVE** | Southern architecture is all about comfort and civility, as this upper-level porch off the master bedroom demonstrates.





essence, relying on symmetry, shadow, and simple square piers. He also stuck with natural materials such as wood, stone, pea gravel, and brick.

Because homes in the development are close together, privacy is at a premium. The garage and a guest room are on the lower level with a walled courtyard that serves as an outdoor foyer and private entrance area. Public living areas were bumped up to the main level, out of direct street view. For even greater privacy, the most intimate spaces, the master bedroom and bath, rose to the upper level.

The heart of the home is the wide-open main level, with the living room, kitchen, and dining area sharing one big, public

## New/Old Urban Living

The antithesis of suburban sprawl, New Urbanism is a return to the idea that neighborhoods should offer diverse living options within walking distance of everyday amenities such as parks and shops.

Advantages to living in a New Urbanism environment include:

■ **Active Lifestyle.** Communities include ample walking paths to subtly encourage residents to be out and about. They'll feel better and meet their neighbors.

■ **Save Time.** Yards are generally smaller, which means less work for individual residents.

■ **Go Green.** Building on small lots decreases a home's environmental impact. Smart planning keeps homes close together, which limits urban sprawl and reduces ecological damage that attends any construction project.

■ **Design elements.** Architecture that's rich with character has helped New Urbanism gain a reputation as a movement committed to good design.







THIS PHOTO | With open shelving around the range and island seating, the kitchen has the casual ambience of a cafe.  
OPPOSITE | For meals where some formality is appropriate, the dining table sits just off the edge of the marble-topped island.



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Instead of walling off the bathroom, pull back the curtain on a different approach. Privacy is still available when spaces are separated by draperies.









Simple materials in the bath play up, rather than detract from, good design.





“We created a walkable neighborhood that will be as livable in 100 years as it is today,” architect Lew Oliver says.

## About This Home

**SQUARE FEET:** 3,000  
**BEDROOMS:** 2  
**BATHROOMS:** 2 full, 1 half

**FOOTPRINT:** 23 x 42 feet  
**LOCATION:** Woodstock, Georgia

- 1 Enter and go up a flight.** The primary entrance is on the ground floor. Visitors go straight up the stairs to the second level, which is the main public level.
- 2 Kitchen storage.** Because the kitchen is a small galley plus an island, it lacks storage space. A large pantry is the solution.
- 3 Two bedrooms up.** The master bedroom suite and a second bedroom are on the upper level. There's also a laundry located conveniently off the hallway between this pair of bedrooms.
- 4 Privacy level.** Stetched along a wall, the master bath includes a dressing closet.

space. “The floor plan is open and uncomplicated so homeowners can figure out their own solutions to furniture arrangement without having a set plan,” the architect says.

Oliver and interior designer Janie Hirsch looked for opportunities to boost storage, including drawers and closets wherever possible. “In the stairwell leading from the main level to the upper-level bedrooms, we added a built-in cabinet with drawers inset into the wall,” Hirsch says. “We also included a walk-in pantry off the kitchen with a desk, shelving, and canned-goods storage.”

Such collaborative efforts went a long way toward making the house a success, Oliver believes. Good architecture is a “big puzzle,” with everyone—the designers, the builders, and homeowners—working together to make the pieces fit. \*

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