

23-26

NATURE'S CANVAS

A new home and neighborhood near Stillwater prove that nature provides the best design direction.

BY SHAWN GILLIAM
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SPACECRAFTING

Farming 120 acres of land near Stillwater for 10 years—and mentoring immigrant farmers on the land for nearly 15 more—has given David Washburn an intimate understanding of nature's nuances. "The views here are quite extraordinary," says Washburn, the longtime owner of Minneapolis's former Valcucine

kitchen showroom. "Our goal has always been not to screw it up."

Builder and business partner Bob Appert jumped to join him in developing the farm, along with an adjacent 200 acres they acquired three years ago, to become a neighborhood called White Oaks Savanna. "I knew right away it was something special," Appert says.

They worked closely with landscape architect Travis Van Liere on deciding how to site the houses. "They're like cutouts in this preserved rolling prairie grassland," Washburn says. Construction on the first one wrapped up in September. "It provides the perfect example of how we want to nestle all the houses into the landscape," Washburn says. "You feel that right away—the house comes and goes and almost disappears as you drive down the road." Here are four other takeaways from the design team. ■

NO. 23

DON'T RULE OUT A LIVING ROOM, BUT MAKE IT LIVABLE Architect Christopher Strom was tempted to forgo a separate living room in the 3,500-square-foot house, but the owners wanted a space where they could have a conversation while kids played in the family room (right). Here and elsewhere, "color is held back, which works well when a home isn't too large," interior designer Christine Frisk says, noting that main-level walls are all painted a Sherwin-Williams beige called Drift of Mist. Pattern in the living room rug from Legacy Looms at IMS helps hide soiling, and the floors are white oak. "It's such a hard-wearing material that can be easily refinished down the road," Frisk says.



NO. 24

LIMIT FOCAL POINTS Without question, the views are the star of the show for this home, something the design team recognized from the start. The dining room (left) is "a pure, minimalist space that's pretty much just a table, chairs, and three walls of glass," Strom says. The same principle of simplicity applies to the home's interior design as a whole. "I love what we did from a color and furnishings standpoint—they're not trying to be the most important part of any space," Frisk says. "It's about falling back and letting the landscape be the focal point." In a home where the landscape isn't paramount, she says, the focal point could shift to another feature, such as a standout backsplash or wallcovering detail.



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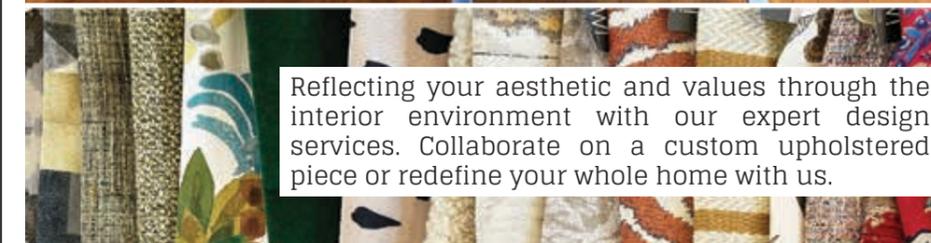
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NO. 25

ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITIES OF WEAR AND TEAR Strom and his team planned the open kitchen, dining room, and family room (right) for maximum function and fun. “This is where the family lives every single day—preparing meals, playing with toys, watching TV,” he says. Furnishings are comfortable and, perhaps surprisingly, mostly commercial. That allows for maximum wear- and stain-resistance, says Frisk, and many of the pieces, including the dining room table and yellow family room chair, come from her showroom, Fuse, at IMS. “We knew not to treat this structure like a work of art,” Frisk says. “They’re going to live hard in these spaces.”



NO. 26

NOTE THAT A SIMPLE EXTERIOR CAN BE STUNNING Strom’s team designed the home as if it were on a lake or river, with two “fronts.” The front facing the road (left) features two types and orientations of composite wood siding, all of it horizontal except for at the entry, where it’s vertical. A roof of asphalt shingles with a heavier-than-standard thickness looks sharp but is substantially less expensive than slate, standing-seam metal, or wood shakes. And then there’s the eight-foot window on the garage. “The larger window makes the garage feel smaller and the house more like a cottage,” Strom says. “There’s a little bit of cost to it, but less than tons of architectural detail.”

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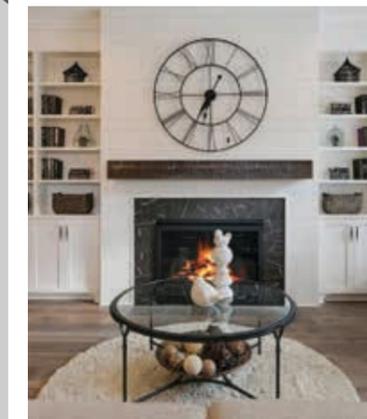
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