

habitat



NO STONE UNTURNUED

Take a peek inside Dan and Lurleen Ladd's completely renovated home in Highland Park West. **PAGE 122**



WIDE OPEN SPACES

A spacious layout, big windows and plenty of light make this house a relaxing respite for a busy family

BY KATE HARRINGTON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HAYDEN SPEARS

Buying a home is usually a lengthy process. But within 30 minutes of first setting foot in their Highland Park West home in 2007, Dan and Lurleen Ladd knew they would purchase it.

The Ladds lived one street over at the time, but with two children and three dogs, they had been thinking about either a renovation or a move. The Ridge Oak Drive home wasn't yet on the market when they got a look, but they knew there was something

special about the house—and that they'd have to move fast if they wanted it.

The 4,800-square-foot home backs up to Bright Leaf Preserve, and just beyond the backyard is a tangle of wild trails and green space. Foxes, deer and wild turkeys sometimes wander up to the back door. Its location in a neighborhood they already loved was a big plus, too.

Dan, medical director and founder of Tru-Skin Dermatology, recalls that when he was in college he'd commented to a friend that

he would someday live in this neighborhood. With its rolling hills, plentiful trees and proximity to his practice, the area was home to the Ladds, and they didn't want to change that. "This is only the second house we've lived in since Dan finished medical school," Lurleen says. "This was really us sinking down our roots in Austin."

After they closed on the house, they almost immediately started what would become an 18-month renovation. "The family joke was that we didn't stay in the old house because I didn't want to do a renovation, and then of course we ended up doing a very big one here," Lurleen says. "But, as happens with renovations, once we started doing one thing it would lead to another, and then it's everything."

The renovation, headed by Komal Sheth of Spaces Designed, transformed the home's French country interior into a modern and



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minimalistic but warm space. The main living area, which had been dark and sectioned off into smaller rooms, is now open and bright with natural light.

In addition to opening up the main living areas, Sheth brought natural elements both into the house and outside to the exterior, tying the natural beauty of the area into the home. Recycled maplewood floors, a Venetian plaster fireplace, a dark and textured Pennsylvania stone that moves from the entryway into the home and recycled glass tiles in the kitchen bring both a green element and beautiful colors and textures into the interior.

More recently, the Ladds replaced three French doors that opened to the backyard with floor-to-ceiling windows and a steel-framed glass door that brings even more light into the living room. “The natural stone and big windows connect the house to the outdoors,” Dan says. “That gives the house a very open feeling. It’s very relaxing to come home to at the end of the day.”

The Ladds have taken advantage of the spacious layout by hosting parties, fundraisers and even a wedding in the house. Many of



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT

The Ladds' living room with floor-to-ceiling windows that look out over Bright Leaf Preserve; the family at their kitchen island; bright colors, like this painting in the dining room, and patterned wallpaper add warmth throughout the house; the Pennsylvania stone wall in the entryway

the events they host are now centered around The Shade Project, a nonprofit dedicated to the prevention of skin cancer that Dan and Lurleen founded together in 2011. The organization provides grants so that parks and schools can build shade structures and does education and outreach, including free skin cancer screenings.

As comfortable as the open living room is, Lurleen says guests and family members alike tend to gravitate toward the kitchen. An island with plenty of seating and a gorgeous, variegated amber quartz countertop provide a natural gathering place. “We have planned many a dinner where I tried to get everyone into the dining room, and no matter what, everybody ends up here,” she says. **AM**

