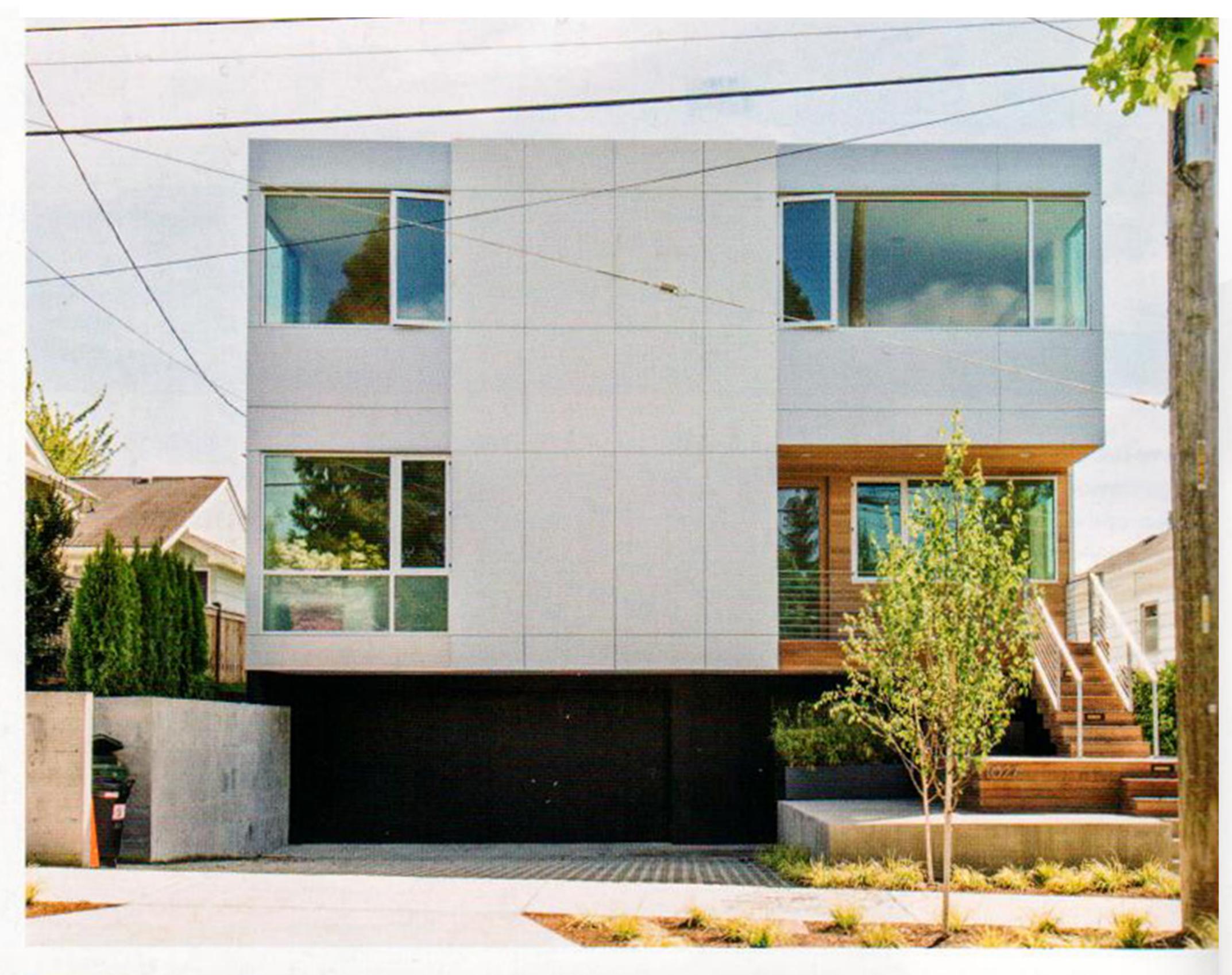
The Upside-Down House Seattle's housing market is one of the strongest in the nation, and developing there is not for the faint of heart. But Kevin Eckert, LEED AP, had a few super powers at his disposal, chief among them was the ability to design and build the project himself. As founder and partner in the Seattle design/build firm Build LLC, Eckert has spearheaded many custom projects and a few speculative projects as well, both single-family and multifamily. His firm views the speculative projects as an opportunity to research and document ideas about planning, construction, and energy management. And many of them end up as housing for members of the staff.

Indeed, when Kevin found the 5,000-square-foot piece of land that became this house, Case Study 2014, he and his family were living in the Park Modern, a multifamily project developed by the firm during the housing boom in 2007. But he, his wife, and his growing sons were increasingly pinched in tight quarters and were ready for a bit more room. It was still in the depths of the housing bust when this overlooked urban lot became available. "It's in a very intriguing neighborhood," says Kevin. "One with untapped density potential near one of the new light rail lines in northeast Seattle. It's going to be robust."

It was the right time and right place for Kevin to build a house for his family. To make the most of the elevated site, which had the potential for commanding views of the city, Kevin determined quickly they needed to flip the floor plan. The views were only available from upper levels, so he placed a future apartment space and garage on the street level, four bedrooms and





Above: Hidden at garage level is a future dwelling unit. Bedrooms are on the second level and living spaces on the third. Left: The stair wall was custom painted by a family friend. The wood grilled cabinet conceals media storage.



"We thought, 'hey, we make an effort to go on 10-mile hikes, it seems silly to worry about climbing a few stairs."

-Kevin Eckert

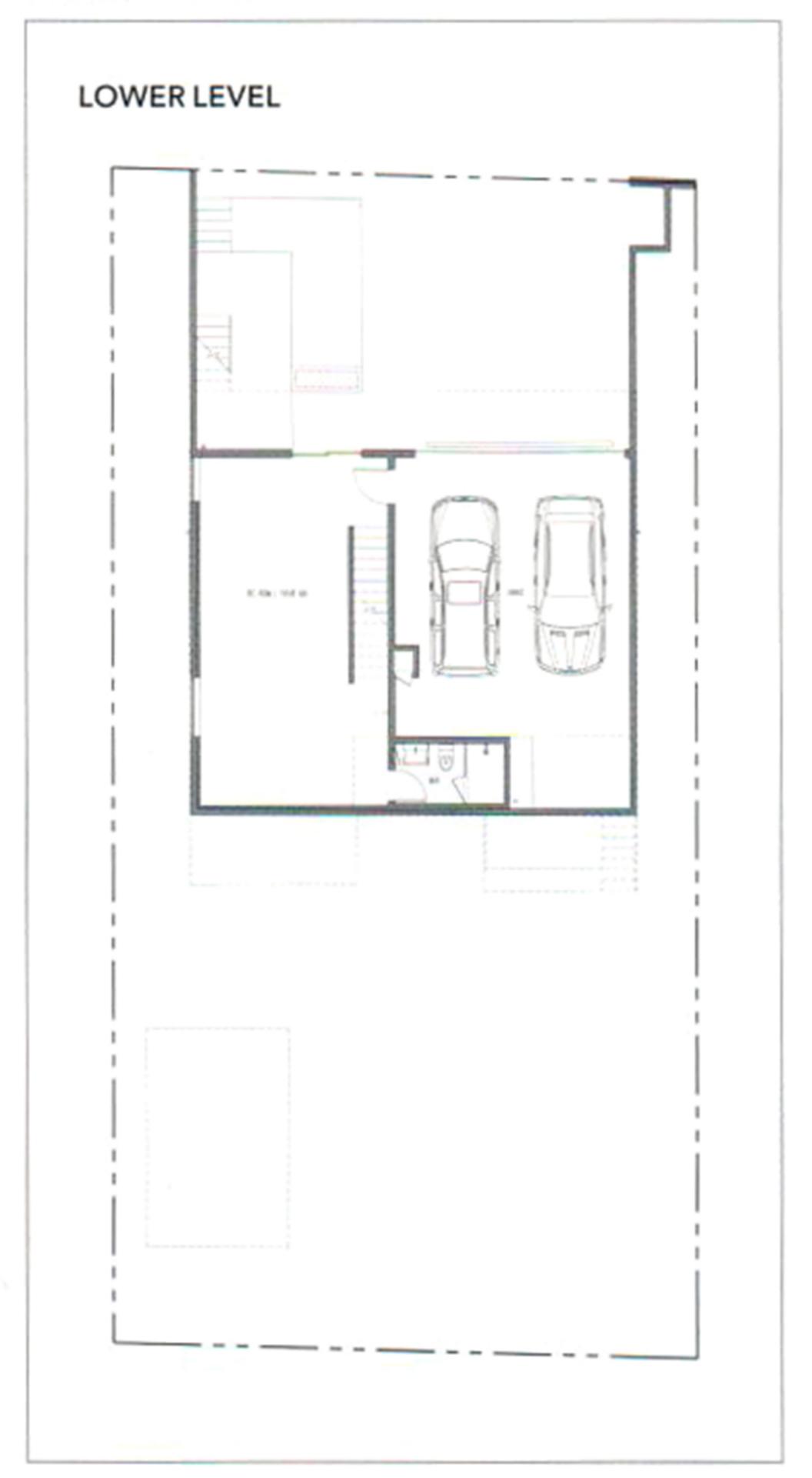


Top: The best views are from the roof deck: The panorama reaches to the Olympic Mountains. Code dictated the green roof to control water run off. Above: Stacked stairs reaching up to the roof effectively ventilitate the house in warm weather. Right: Kevin converted an existing garage into an art studio for his wife, Erika. Footprint and roof pitch had to stay.



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FLOOR PLANS

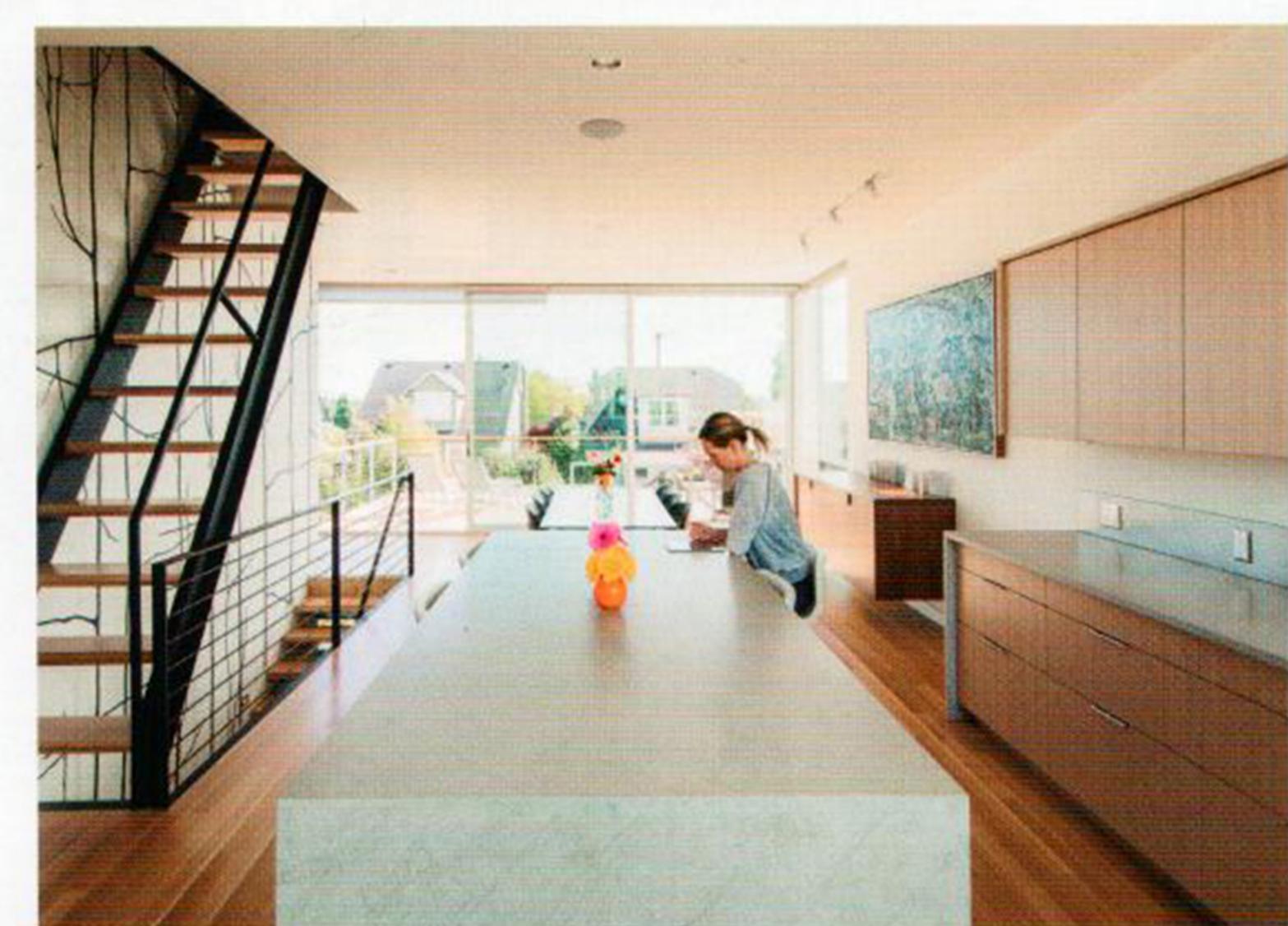








gain and light when needed. Right: Kevin aligned the dining table placement with the kitchen island for large dinner parties.



Left: Although the firm tends to favor a darker palette, Kevin felt the house needed the warmth of lighter woods, such as the light stained oak shown in the master bedroom.

Case Study 2014

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Kevin Eckert, LEED AP, BUILD LLC; Charles Caldwell, project designer; Bart Gibson, project manager,

PROJECT SIZE: 3,442 square feet, including garage; 198 square foot art studio

SITE SIZE: 5,000 square feet

CONSTRUCTION COST: \$237 a square foot

PHOTOGRAPHY: BUILD LLC

KEY PRODUCTS

WINDOWS: Marlin Windows

SLIDING DOORS: La Cantina, Milgard

ROOFING: Esary SIDING: Alex panels

KITCHEN APPLIANCES: Jenn-Air, Imperial

LAUNDRY APPLIANCES: Electrolux

FAUCETS AND FIXTURES: Kohler, Brizio,

Graff, Toto

CABINET HARDWARE: Mockett

DOOR HARDWARE: Karcher Design

LIGHTING: Philips Lightolier, Juno, Tech Lighting, Artemide, Thomas Lighting,

Aamsco

BATHROOM COUNTERS: PentalQuartz

TILE: Parc Botticino, Daltile PAINT: Sherwin-Williams

main entry on the second level, and the living/dining/kitchen space on the third level. There's also a terrace off the dining area and a roof terrace at the top of the house. "The roof terrace was something we were going to just frame, but you could see 360 degrees—you could see mountains. So, we decided to just get it done," says Eckert. "We're happy we did."

The downside of the plan? The uphill climb to enter the house. Imagine carrying groceries up multiple flights of stairs (city codes don't allow dumbwaiters or other conveyances.) "We thought, 'hey, we make effort to go on 10-mile hikes, it seems silly

to worry about climbing a few stairs," says Kevin. "But we did try to make a lot of the climb disappear—to make that entry experience enjoyable. There's a transition from stone to concrete to warm wood to a glowing front door. Even though we usually go for a darker wood palette in our houses, we decided everything here needed to be light."

Another part of the project was an art studio for Kevin's wife, Erika. An old garage on the property was converted for the purpose. Not only does it allow Erika to work from home, it also supplies some privacy for the backyard.

Since this project was a research experiment of sorts, Kevin ruminates a bit on lessons learned. Here, he placed the stair at the center of the house to create a division of function for living spaces on the top floor. The pro is that the roof hatch acts as a heat chimney, effectively ventilating the house in hot weather. But Kevin thinks a fully open plan would be more commodious and is designing a current project with the stair to the side. The other do-over is no human door to the garage. The result, says Kevin, "is we use the garage door all the time to get into the house. We're fixing that in the next project as well."

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