

A Cut Above

Dramatic design for a mountainside house

By Lauren Jones
Portrait by Matt Rose



While talk of developer David Zimmerman’s latest residential project in Ciel, a community of luxury, custom-crafted homes atop Elk Mountain in Asheville, heats up around town, Zimmerman and residential designer Jason Weil are keeping it cool and creative as they design a dream home that bends the rules of mountainside architecture. The duo plans to take innovative design to new heights — quite literally.

Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Falling Water,” a home famous for being built over a waterfall, Retro+Fit Design’s Weil set out to design a contemporary home that would be aesthetically and structurally cutting-edge. “It has these dramatic cantilevers with very little of the house actually touching the ground. The rest of the house seems like it is just flying off into the clouds,” says Weil.

Ciel, with its motto “Feel the Earth, Touch the Sky,” seems the perfect spot for a house-among-clouds. Slated to be complete in April 2014, the 3,818-square-foot home is expected to break ground this summer. Jade Mountain Builders, specializing in green construction techniques, is the builder.

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Jason Weil, residential designer and owner of Retro+Fit Design in Asheville, teamed up with Allard & Roberts Interior Design for the project at Ciel.

Upon visiting the site, Weil began sketching a geometric home with stacked, boxy levels and a daring design that lifted the structure off of the ground. “Usually I’ll start with a floor plan, but this one started out almost sculptural. I got pretty far along before even figuring out what the floor plan would be,” says Weil.

The tri-level design features four bedrooms, four-and-a-half baths, an open kitchen, living and dining room. A lower level recreation room and bedrooms are ideal for older children or overnight guests who would enjoy having their own space. The expansive top-level master suite, with

its library, walk-in-closet and private deck, will provide parents or hosts with a posh getaway.

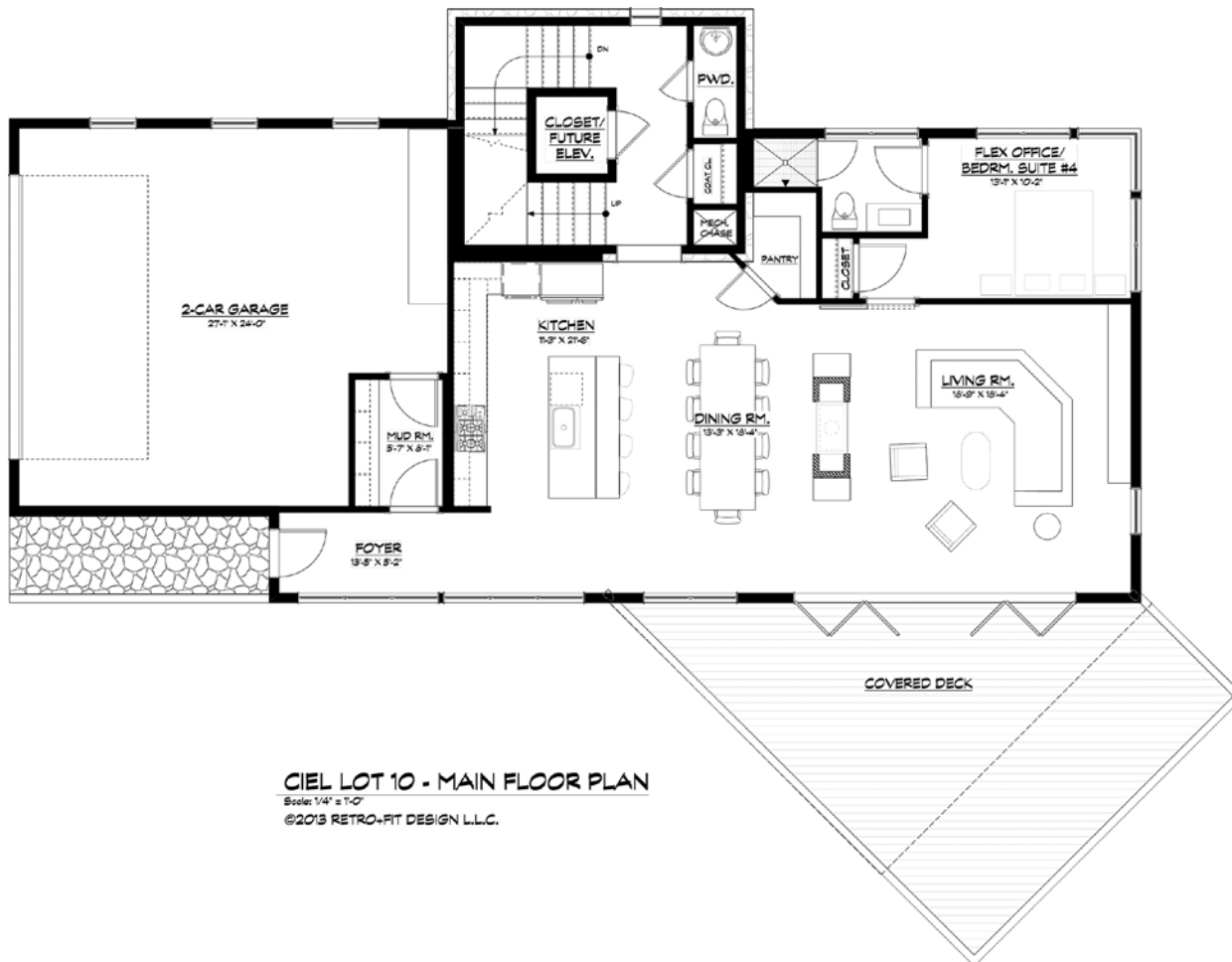
As of now, the home is being built on spec, meaning it is being built in anticipation of having a buyer.

A major selling point is an abundance of outdoor living space, appealing to a couple or family who entertains often. “Most houses here on the mountains basically have sticks coming out of the ground supporting a deck, and other than that, you may not have any other space,” says Weil. However, his design takes full advantage of the flat roofs by incorporating

five outdoor spaces onto the home itself. “You can use every roof that is on the house to do gardening, have a hot tub, do whatever you want,” adds Zimmerman.

To achieve the “floating” look of the home, a stone-clad stairwell encircling an elevator will serve as the vertical circulation core anchoring the structure. An advanced structural system using steel and micropiles will provide support for the large cantilevers. “We’re not breaking new ground, but we’re using structural techniques that are not typically seen in residential architecture,” says Weil.

Though squared levels and flat



lines are not often found in mountain landscapes, the home will not look out-of-place. Zimmerman insists on using materials indigenous to the location; the stone and wooden exterior will cause one to think that, perhaps, the house sprung out of the very land it rests upon. To add to the organic feel, they are exploring the idea of staining the wooden shiplap siding to match the color of the tree trunks in the winter.

Zimmerman and Weil have teamed up with Sharon Allard and Talli Roberts of Allard & Roberts Interior Design to add warmth and a sense of high style into the home's contemporary design.

The use of reclaimed wood, stone and other natural materials will impart

an organic and modern feel. Neutral colors will "frame the outdoor views, and not fight with them," says Allard. The earth tones will also instill a timeless quality to the décor. "Our job is to work alongside Jason who is working within the landscape. He's knocked this one out of the park!" says Roberts, "We are very excited about this collaborative effort."

Zimmerman's philosophy for his homes is simple and sensible: to be as environmentally sound as possible while maintaining integrity, efficiency and cost effectiveness. As with all Ciel homes, it will be built to LEED standards, which Zimmerman says will make it "a healthier and more efficient home to live in."

"David has never been scared to go

out on a limb and bring something really unique to the area," says Roberts, who has worked with Zimmerman on two other homes in Ciel: a contemporary mountain rustic and a mid-century modern. In creating this house, Zimmerman wants to be sure that he is providing not only a home, but a work of art. "Every time I do a house, I want someone to say 'Wow, that's really cool,'" says Zimmerman. "It's the most satisfying feeling."

To learn more about the Ciel community, visit ciel-property.com; Allard & Roberts Interior Design, visit www.allardandroberts.com; Retro+Fit Design, visit www.retro-fit-design.com; Jade Mountain Builders, visit www.jademountainbuilders.com.