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NATURAL ESCAPE

A modern take on a northern Minnesota retreat pulls
inspiration from the surrounding landscape



TEXT **DANIELLE FIELDS**

PHOTOGRAPHY **MOTION 46 MEDIA**

ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN **CHARLES R. STINSON ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN**

BUILD **NEAR & STREETER CUSTOM BUILDERS**

LANDSCAPING **URBAN ECOSYSTEMS**

Perched above Big Sand Lake in Park Rapids, the home is immersed in nature, which is underscored by its use of organic materials. A sloped garden allows more natural light to flow into the lower level, and surrounding plants and trees honor the home's location.



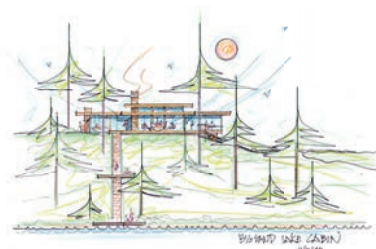


One of the homeowners' favorite spaces in the house is the four-season porch. Enveloped by large triple-pane windows that open up in summer and keep the room cozy in winter, the room gives way to views of the lake and surrounding woods, creating a true year-round respite.

THERE IS ADMIRATION of nature, and then there is deep connection to a place. For the husband-and-wife homeowners of this new vacation home in Park Rapids, building a retreat rooted in the landscape and celebrating northern Minnesota in all seasons was paramount.

The owners had been enjoying respite up north on Big Sand Lake with their families for decades but in recent years began to desire a space that was all their own. They envisioned a modern home, having long admired the work of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. They'd also often observed another eye-catching home on the lake—one designed by Charles R. Stinson Architecture + Design more than a decade ago. "When we would take our boat out, we would see that house and be like, 'Wow, that's amazing. We'd love something like that if we ever did come up here,'" the owners say.

They connected with Stinson in 2020 and were charmed by his vision for a house on a lot 60 feet above the water line, boasting breathtaking, seemingly infinite views of mesmerizing Big Sand Lake and its blue hues. Stinson's signature style, marked by extreme precision, horizontal and vertical lines, and an ethos that celebrates the land made their partnership a perfect match. Stinson then connected the owners with Bob Near and Brandon Streeter at Near & Streeter Custom Builders, and together, they all embarked on a multi-year journey to create a dream getaway.



The Vision

The owners were fully sold on the lot and home design plan after they joined Stinson on location and observed him stand on top of the old bunkhouse on the property, close his eyes, shift to the left, and say, "Right here. This is the angle you want your house at."

IMAGE CHARLES R. STINSON ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN



While the owners enjoy sweeping lake views, the lot's position offers privacy. "What I love about this house is that you have to be kind of in the middle of the lake to really see this place," Near says. "You don't get this up-close look at it. They have their own private oasis."

“

The goal was to keep the architecture simple enough, so it gets out of its own way, so the view does the work.

– Charles Stinson



ABOVE RIGHT The great room is a focal point of the home and provides easy flow into the kitchen and adjacent four-season porch. Sage-blue, hand-tied Tibetan rugs complement the wood flooring, ceiling, and natural stone fireplace.

BELOW LEFT & RIGHT Cabinetry in the kitchen combines light-finished rift oak on the base cabinets with a darker tone on full-height elements, adding depth and balance. Bronze metal hardware and lighting introduce warmth.





“The idea was to create a sanctuary, a getaway that really celebrates being at the lake,” Stinson says. “The goal was to keep the architecture simple enough, so it gets out of its own way, so the view does the work.”

And the view works hard. The great room provides a profound wow moment: Floor-to-ceiling triple-pane windows allow natural light to spill in, giving way to expansive views of the water, and soaring ceilings of Alaskan yellow cedar wood stretch from the interior to the exterior roof overhangs, reinforcing the indoor-outdoor connection. Other organic elements like a natural stone fireplace and rift- and quarter-sawn white oak bring subtlety and warmth. And it’s a feeling that permeates through every room.

“The interior needed to harmonize rather than compete, so we selected finishes that are comfortable, textural, and quiet in tone—allowing the eye to move naturally from inside to the surrounding landscape,” says Kim Streeter, lead interior designer for Charles R. Stinson Architecture + Design. “Fabrics, rugs, artwork, and accessories draw directly from nature’s palette, creating a seamless inside-to-outside transition that feels effortless.” “The idea that contemporary and modern architecture is cold—this house just challenges that,” adds Near. “With the use of warm materials, it’s such an inviting space.”

The landscaping honors northern Minnesota, too—an intentional decision by the homeowners and executed by St. Paul-based Urban Ecosystems. “We keyed in on what



ABOVE The lower level is built for entertaining, featuring a kitchenette, multiple TVs, and a sound system ideal for sports or movie nights. Guest suites with ensuite bathrooms on the same level make hosting family and friends easy.

ABOVE RIGHT To further strengthen the home's ties to the state in which it resides, all of the art curated for the home is from Minnesota artists.

RIGHT The primary bath looks out to the lake and features thoughtful storage and elegant tile and hardware selections.



we thought would be signatures of the bold northern Minnesota landscape ... We really wanted to crystallize the northern Minnesota experience,” says Michael Keenan, design director for Urban Ecosystems. His team sourced Laurentian slate from Virginia, Minnesota, to create cascading stone installs and planted native species like blue stem grass and a kaleidoscope of others throughout the property.

For the owners and the design-build team, the collaboration of all parties is one of the most memorable aspects of the project.

“It’s one of my favorite homes that I’ve worked on,” says Brandon Streeter. “From an architectural standpoint, the site and the clients are some of the best we’ve worked with. And we continue to have a great working relationship.” And the journey continues. The owners are currently working with the team to install a guest house, garage building, and outdoor pavilion on the property.

“It takes really strong partners that develop trust quickly to build something this magical,” the owners say, like “the transparency, the creativity, and the things that took us outside of our mindset and our comfort zone.” For them, it made all the difference—now they have a retreat to cherish for years to come.

“When you’re inside this house, you feel like you’re in a masterpiece,” they say. “It is just one of those things ... it’s not just a home; it’s a piece of property that you’ve wanted to be on all your life.” charlesstinson.com, nearandstreeter.com





BUYERS' GUIDE

DINING ROOM

Lighting - Hammerton Studio, studio.hammerton.com

Table/Chairs - Costantini Pietro, costantinipietro.com

EXTERIOR

Glacier Ridge - Ashlar Pattern

Ceiling and Siding - Thermally treated Alaskan yellow cedar, reSAWN Timber Co., resawntimberco.com

Windows - Loewen Windows, Bronze, loewen.com

GREAT ROOM

Rugs - Hand-tied Tibetan, Woven Arts, wovenarts.com

Furniture Grouping - Gamma, gammarr.com

Art - Edward Lentsch, edwardlentsch.com

INTERIOR FIXED FINISHES

Cabinetry - Rift white oak, light and dark finishes, Braaten Creative Woods, braatencreativewoods.com

Flooring - Rift and quartered oak, custom finish, reSAWN Timber Co., resawntimberco.com

Ceiling and Wall Wood - Williwaw Alaskan yellow cedar, reSAWN Timber Co., resawntimberco.com

Italian Plaster Walls - Otto Painting Design, ottopaintingdesign.com

Wallcovering - Holly Hunt, hollyhunt.com

Countertops - Ironsbridge, Delgatie and Winterborne, Cambria, cambriausa.com

LOWER-LEVEL

Game Table/Chairs - Potocco, potocco.it

Stools/High Tops - Elite Modern, elitemodern.com

Lighting - Hammerton Studio, studio.hammerton.com

OUTDOOR FURNISHINGS

Furniture Grouping - Gloster, gloster.com

