

High Design, Low Carbon

Text: Diane Kolak

Light gathers differently inside the newest home on one of Evanston's most picturesque historic streets in Illinois. It bounces softly off white oak and plaster, fills each room with a tempered glow, and never feels harsh or cold. From the street, the home's proportions blend with its early-1900s neighbors even while its architectural features plainly state its contemporary creation. Behind the simple façade lies a feat of modern performance.

Designed by the collaborative team at NextHaus Alliance, the welcoming residence proves that a sustainable, net-positive house

doesn't need to look experimental. It can feel timeless, human, and unmistakably beautiful.

For architect Nate Kipnis, FAIA, of Kipnis Architecture + Planning; builder Scott Berliant of Berliant Builders Inc.; and interior designer Lauren Coburn of Lauren Coburn Architectural Interior Designer, the project offered rare opportunities: to merge high design and low carbon under one roof, and to demonstrate how collaboration makes premium levels of sustainability not just achievable, but artful. The three are independent business owners who work together under NextHaus as a collective of design experts.

Kipnis founded NextHaus to unite independent experts around a shared mission of creating beautiful, sustainable homes with a mind toward the future. The team's Evanston Passive House proves that their concept works, having fulfilled the baseline criterion for the rare Phius, or Passive House Institute U.S., ZERO certification: producing as much or more energy than it consumes. That's no small feat in a city just north of Chicago, where temperature extremes are the norm.

In addition to the high sustainability standards attached to this project, the team faced

