

inspired infill



Judkins Park, once a crime-filled expanse, is now enjoying a renaissance thanks in large part to innovative construction and sophisticated home owners. | by Britt Olson

WILL AUSTIN PHOTOGRAPHY

When Abby and Justin Calvo were looking to move from their Pioneer Square loft, they expected to settle in one of Seattle's ubiquitous Craftsman-style houses in burgeoning neighborhoods southeast of downtown with their real estate agent, who led them to the architectural firm Pb Elemental, known for its

urban infill designs, which offer cost-effective features such as accessory dwelling units to make housing more affordable for young buyers. Pb founders David Biddle and Chris Pardo, who graduated from the UW's design-build program, joke that their fanaticism for making models convinced them to establish a company so that they could turn their min-

atures into life-size creations. The Calvos saw their modern aesthetic and appreciation for Asian architecture in Pb's homes and bought the firm's next project in Judkins Park when it was only a frame and a blueprint.

Judkins Park is a bewitching urban emerald that lures joggers at dawn and novice ballplayers at dusk. It wasn't always such



Naturally bright Designer Andrea Bartlett combined exotic wood and bright colors, which stand out amid the glass and metal surfaces.

an oasis. Nestled among cramped lots, this communal backyard was once a trench of residential refuse and a haunt for drug dealers and prostitutes. In a hasty act of renewal the city planted a lawn over the ravine, but the stench from its core continued, prompting residents to label their district “rejected.” The area floundered from the 1960s through the early '90s, as the construction of I-90 split the community and sparked an exodus of middle-class denizens. The Pro Parks Levy

of the late '90s finally provided thoughtful improvements, which have led more recently to an influx of young families and couples who covet its convenient location and diversity. Abby, the director of communications for gourmet beverage company Dry Soda, and Justin, a manager for Avanade, an IT consulting firm for Microsoft products, epitomize the new Judkins Park residents.

The Calvos' 2,647-square-foot home features a boxy design that incorporates natural materials, floor-to-ceiling windows, and open spaces, all Pb hallmarks. Marine-grade fir plywood, cedar, and Hardipanel encase the exterior. The home's narrow footprint called for an open floor plan and strategic window placement to maximize sunlight. Windows mirror each other, facing east and west, so as the sun moves across the sky the house is continually taking in light. The guest room and Justin's music room—he plays the guitar and mandolin—have panoramic windows, which frame the scenery like works of art. Perhaps the most remarkable use of glass is in the expansive windows that expose the central staircase to the quiet street out in front. The handrail consists of sheets of glass, heightening the transparency of the space, which is warmed by cedar siding. Dangling from

the ceiling is a Santa & Cole light fixture the Calvos picked out; its twisted mass of glowing wood is a compelling juxtaposition to the stair treads' straight lines.

Radiant-heated concrete floors sprawl through the lower level. The Calvos are avid entertainers, and the kitchen is always the center of their affairs, so the room's design was of special interest to the couple. Justin used SketchUp, a professional design program, to draw up ideas for the cabinets. Pb's project manager Greg Squires edited, then incorporated the cabinet modifications into the kitchen, which eventually included a built-in speed oven, a Miele stove with a white pool-tile backsplash, and a Mac. From bar stool perches the Calvos use their computer to watch the news and control the first-floor sound system.

Pb had already determined most of the home's features before the Calvos came onboard, but they left many of the interior details, such as veneers, to the couple on one condition: all materials should be natural. The Calvos opted to start from scratch, selling most of their loft furniture. They then enlisted designer Andrea Bartlett to combine the architectural elements of the new house with their own personal flair and a nod to



Resources



Let there be light Pb Elemental designed the home to maximize east- and west-facing windows to draw in natural light.

their travels to Thailand. The result is a combination of exotic, dark woods, and bright color palettes that produce a dynamic living space that blends with the wood, metal, and glass backdrop.

Bartlett suggested zebrawood for the cabinets to complete the spunky feel for the kitchen. Black honed soapstone countertops highlight the dark vertical stripes of the wood, while twin hand-blown Anon lamps float above the island, splashing faint shadows on the ceiling.

A vintage Italian poster for Moretti-brand rain covers hangs on a wall across from the

kitchen. Bartlett borrowed the rust and yellow colors of the print for use on kitchen and living room walls. On a whim the Calvos selected an imposing Hungarian carved-wood wheat thresher from Cargo, in Portland, to hang on the wall near the dining table and the open kitchen. The thresher pays homage to the Eastern Washington wheat farm Abby's father grew up on, and plays off the horse-drawn wheat cart in the Moretti ad. Bartlett also helped to select the leather Paulistano chairs and Albero sofa, which faces a balcony and Judkins Park beyond.

Floors of sustainable Brazilian hickory run throughout the upstairs rooms, the wood's rich variegated hues cultivating warmth. In the master bedroom next to the balcony door hangs a framed print of the Seven Blessings, a Jewish ceremonial prayer read at nuptials. The paprika-hued ceiling panels and silk duvet on the wengé wood bed were inspired by their honeymoon in Thailand.

Although their angular designs spoke to the Calvos, Biddle and Pardo acknowledge that not everyone is a fan, but say neighborhoods have largely been grateful for the investment in their communities. Pardo explains that they only choose neighborhoods with potential for smart growth that will minimize sprawl and increase density. Biddle agrees: "We build to what the neighborhood can be." Currently Pb has projects under way in the Central District, Georgetown, South Park, and Rainier Valley. Nearby, in the reinvented Judkins Park, kids play pepper as the sun goes down while the Calvos look on from their balcony, happy to be a part of the neighborhood's transformation. ✨

ARCHITECTS

Dave Biddle, Chris Pardo, and Greg Squires, Pb Elemental
1916 23rd Ave S, Seattle
206-285-1464
www.elementalarchitecture.com

INTERIOR DESIGN

Andrea Bartlett, Bartlett Design Company
159 Western Ave W, Seattle
206-217-4461
www.bartletttdesigncompany.com

ANON LAMPS

Resolute
2101 Ninth Ave, Ste 100, Seattle
206-343-9323

ANTIQUES

Cargo
380 NW 13th St, Portland
503-209-8349; www.cargoinc.com

SANTA & COLE LEONARDO LIGHT FIXTURE

Diva
1300 Western Ave, Seattle
206-287-9992

PAULISTANO CHAIRS, ALBERO SOFA, LEM PISTON STOOLS

Design Within Reach
1918 First Ave, Seattle
206-443-9900; www.dwr.com

WOOD FLOORS

Br-111
800-525-2711; www.br111.com