

# Home & Garden



## The Foxgate

**Architect** | David Maurer, Maurer Architecture

**Project location** | Raleigh

**Beds/baths** | 3/2½

**Heated square footage** | 1,100

**Key design concept** | Affordable housing, open living

**Cost** | \$130,000 (base price \$118,000)

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAURER ARCHITECTURE

## home of the month

September's profile of a well-designed space

See more photos of this house and other Home of the Month entries and profiles online at [www.newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com).  
key word: **architectural**. Next month's home: Bungalow Addition & Renovation

# City living for less

Today's Home of the Month is reviewed by Thomas Barrie AIA, director of the School of Architecture at N.C. State University's College of Design. Home of the Month, a collaboration with the College of Design, shows possibilities in constructing a space that's well thought-out and built with the homeowners' living patterns and preferences in mind. Each month, we'll profile a new home selected from designs by area architects.

By THOMAS BARRIE  
GUEST COLUMNIST

Kimberly Larson and her husband, Kris, are "downtown people." They share one car, walk to downtown restaurants and spend a lot of time on their second-floor porch, taking in the great views of downtown Raleigh.

Their home, located in a national historic district in Southeast Raleigh, gives them the lifestyle they want without the big price tag of a downtown condo or apartment loft.

Called the Foxgate, the Larson home is one of a number of single-family models designed by David Maurer of Maurer Ar-

### DESIGN CALL

Architects: We are searching for next year's designs. Details inside, page 3E.

chitecture that mesh affordable downtown living with high quality and good design. The compact 1,100-square-foot house adopts traditional motifs of American domestic architecture. It sits close to the sidewalk, with steps that lead to a generous front porch decorated with rocking chairs and hanging plants. The porch creates a transitional space, safely off the

street but close enough for neighborly conversations.

The Foxgate doesn't duplicate the older buildings around it but expresses "new interpretations of historic styles."

"Having lived in North Carolina so long," says architect Maurer, "I can't help but be influenced by its historic architecture."

With its hip-gable roof, double-hung windows and front porches (downstairs and up), the house blends appropriately to its historic surroundings, but at the same time, notes the Home of the Month panel, "responds to modern living."



The Foxgate is the result of a city of Raleigh program to build affordable single-family homes. In the program, the city uses federal community block grants to buy properties for improvement. Developers are then invited to submit proposals for building affordable homes on the properties. City finance programs assist homeowners with low interest loans and other subsidies.

The Foxgate uses creative approaches to reduce costs, achieving affordability without sacrificing quality. Maurer says, "Affordable housing and good design can, and should, coexist."

Numerous steps were taken to minimize construction costs and to keep final sale price down, starting with the overall compact plan.

The house was built on a small lot, which meant lower land costs. Also, the structure was planned around standard building materials, such as 4-foot by 8-foot plywood panels and standard 8-foot wood studs, which meant less wood and less waste.

Shop-built components such as roof trusses further reduced costs. Because Maurer uses some of the same interior and exterior elements, such as specific stair rails and cabinetry, in all of his affordable house designs (though they are configured for each house), building crews did not have to learn new installations, increasing construction efficiency. For ongoing savings, thermal performance and efficient heating and cooling systems minimize maintenance and energy costs.

Including upgrades, the total price for the Foxgate was about \$130,000. (The base price of the design was \$118,000.)

The Larsons didn't want a "gigantic" house or the stuff to fill it, Kimberly says.

The couple love the kitchen and the way it opens up to the living and dining rooms. They also like how the porches expand the living spaces.

The smart layout makes use of every inch of space in the house. The enclosure of the utility room and guest bathroom skillfully creates an entry hall. A handy closet on the

## interior

The stairway leading upstairs is snugly tucked in a corner of the Foxgate living room. Every inch of the small house is used efficiently. The enclosure of the utility room and guest bathroom skillfully create an entry hall. A handy closet on the back porch is used to store garden supplies and leashes for the homeowners' two dogs.

## architect's aim

A portion of David Maurer's practice is devoted to providing quality affordable housing. His goal for the Foxgate is a part of that commitment, which is the foundation for his company's TightLines Designs venture. The venture provides home plans for nonprofit and for-profit housing providers. As with the Foxgate, it attempts to "provide quality house designs that fit a more modest budget" and that are "a cut above conventional affordable housing," with curb appeal, environmental sensitivity and livability in an efficient and affordable footprint.

## CALLING ALL ARCHITECTS

We are looking for designs to feature in 2007. Registered architects practicing in North Carolina are invited to submit designs completed since Jan. 1, 2001. The single-family house designs can be for new construction or a major renovation or an addition. The designs should demonstrate quality use of space, affordability, new ideas and solutions for real living issues. A panel of architects and architectural critics will select the top designs. Registration deadline is Monday. Entry submission deadline is Nov. 1. For details, visit [www.design.ncsu.edu](http://www.design.ncsu.edu) and click on the Home of the Month icon. Or send e-mail to [homeofthemonth@ncsu.edu](mailto:homeofthemonth@ncsu.edu).

back porch stores garden supplies and leashes for the couple's two dogs.

Upstairs, three bedrooms with large closets and two baths, one en suite, are achieved in a little more than 600 square feet. The bedrooms give the couple lots of flexibility — one is for guests, and the other is a home office for Kimberly, a landscape architect.

But Kimberly Larson's favorite spot is that second-floor porch, where during the summer, the couple can hear concerts at Alltel Pavilion at Walnut Creek.

There, she also can sit and read, or, in Kimberly's words, "watch the downtown change."

Thomas Barrie teaches design studios that focus on affordable housing and urban design. Reach him at [homeandgarden@newsobserver.com](mailto:homeandgarden@newsobserver.com).



## open living

The Larsons love their kitchen, which opens to the living and dining rooms.

## panel's comments

A "production home that captures the historic character of the neighborhood." The selection panel also praised the project for its affordability and traditional design that is "not cookie cutter."