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Dallas couple finds urban refuge in heart of city

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By NANCY BALDWIN / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

Shafts of shadow and light cross the walls surrounding Julie and David Dempsey's art gallery. The rays are spilling out of the striking second-story skylight of their new home in Urban Reserve.

"I love to watch the shadows move across the wall," Julie says.

The gallery is hung with oils by such [Texas](#) artists as Otis Dozier, Perry Nichols and Don Vogel.



G.J. McCARNEY/DMN

The art lovers and collectors wanted a home where they could showcase their pieces.

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The history and romance of the art are stark contrasts to the contemporary exterior of the home the Dempseys call their sanctuary.

Nestled in the trendy, eco-friendly Urban Reserve development in northeast Dallas, the home is nothing at all what the Dempseys thought they wanted when they decided to move from their traditional [North Dallas](#) neighborhood near Forest and Hillcrest.

Urban Reserve is a 14-acre neighborhood of architecturally modern, single-family homes. The development is between Central Expressway and Greenville Avenue, south of Forest Lane.

After 45 years of marriage, the Dempseys, who are now empty-nesters, knew it was time to downsize.



G.J. McCARTHY/DMN

Upper and lower balconies overlook the forested property and the DART rail line. "We love sitting out there," Julie Dempsey says. "This is so open. I love it. I love being able to see forever."

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Julie, a collector of vintage linens and lace, wanted a home with sweeping views and lots of light, and a workroom where she could manage her textile projects.

"It's really important to me to have a view," she says.

David, a retired pilot and an avid collector of art and sculpture, was looking for a home where he could display his collection.

Both sought a quiet, forested area with privacy.

An article about Urban Reserve captured their attention. "We started learning it was green, and we didn't quite know what that meant," David says. "The concept here was definitely a draw. The more we looked into it, the better it sounded."

Intrigued by the opportunity to build a home focused on sustainability, and attracted to Urban Reserve's wooded lots and closeness to the White Rock Trail, they took the plunge.

The Dempseys enlisted the help of Thomas Krähenbühl and Sandra Beer of TKTR Architects. Because the home was to be LEED-certified, the building and preparation process was extensive. "It didn't intimidate us," David says, noting that this the third home he and his wife have built.

From the beginning, Urban Edge Developers stressed sustainability. LEED certification was not originally a requirement for homes in the neighborhood, but going forward, it will be.

Special features of the home include a geothermal heating and cooling system, soy-based foam insulation, low E glass windows and zero VOC finishes throughout. "All the wood in the house is FSC certified," says David, referring to the Forest Stewardship Council.

They moved in June 2009.

A second-story patio outside David's office is surrounded by sheet steel walls and offers a private area to display the bronze sculpture "Prometheus," by the late Austin artist Charles Umlauf.

Yet the upper and lower balconies that overlook the forested property and the DART rail line are the features the Dempseys appreciate the most and the reason they love living in Urban Reserve.

"We love sitting out there," Julie says. "This is so open. I love it. I love being able to see forever."

"It's very quiet," David says. "This is a real sanctuary."

Nancy Baldwin is a [Plano](#) freelance writer.

ABOUT URBAN RESERVE

Although the recession has slowed the growth, the developers say interest in Urban Reserve has steadily increased. "The traffic has picked up," says Diane Cheatham, president of Urban Edge Developers. "I think 2010 is going to be far better for us."

Future plans include "simpler, smaller" homes with 1,200 square feet of one-story living. "We're shooting for a \$350,000 market on those homes," she says. More than half of the 50 lots have been sold.

For more information, including photos of several homes for sale, go online and check out www.urbanreserve.net.