



RD

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

FOR ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS
OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES

VOL. 1, 2020

The Urban House

Park Slope Townhouse

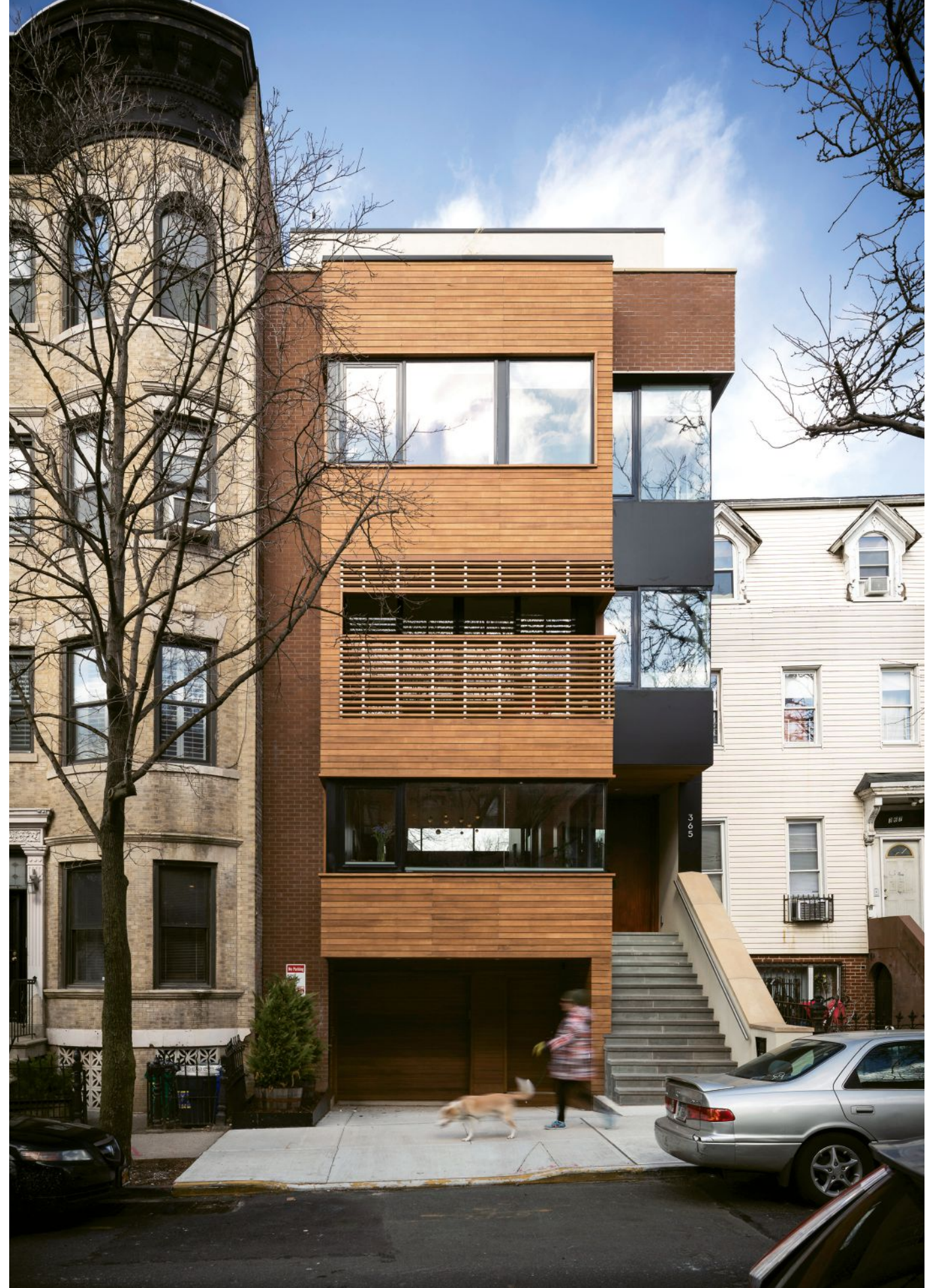
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK
RESOLUTION: 4 ARCHITECTURE



Park Slope is a world of leafy streets lined with brick and brownstone townhouses, often with rounded bays and high stoops. Most were built near the turn of the 20th century and have been lovingly updated over the decades by young families migrating from Manhattan. But here and there are wood-clad houses that are falling apart.

About 10 years ago, architect Joseph Tanney's clients acquired one of those teardowns. Sandwiched between a large apartment building and smaller-scale row houses, it was leaning and you could step through the floors, says Joe. The couple, childless at the time, are both artists and needed only about 1,000 square feet of living space. However, zoning allowed for 5,000 square feet, which is what they ended up with when the house was completed in 2017. "It's what one does in New York City to maximize the value of the property," Joe says.

New York City-based Res4 Architecture is nationally known for its modern, prefabricated houses that aim to improve the way construction is delivered. This project was originally conceived that way, but the modular approach never materialized. When it was first being sketched in 2010, few factories were set up to execute steel framing at that scale. "They were focused on projects 25,000 square feet and up," Joe says. His factory sources have evolved since





This page and opposite: Owned by artists, the Brooklyn townhouse is replete with custom flourishes, including the built-in banquette fabricated on-site from ¼-inch-thick Corian over a plywood shell.

then, though. “Now we are building a modular house out of steel in the Brooklyn Navy Yard,” he says.

With tight neighbors and narrow lots, urban building is predictably difficult, and this case was no different. Trouble began during demolition with the discovery that the wood house next door was leaning 9 inches over the property line. What’s more, the neighbor had appropriated that space by building a TV niche on the lower level. “It took a while to resolve,” Joe says. “We told the neighbor we needed to reclaim the space to build our walls. I think the clients bought him a big TV.”

3D Collage

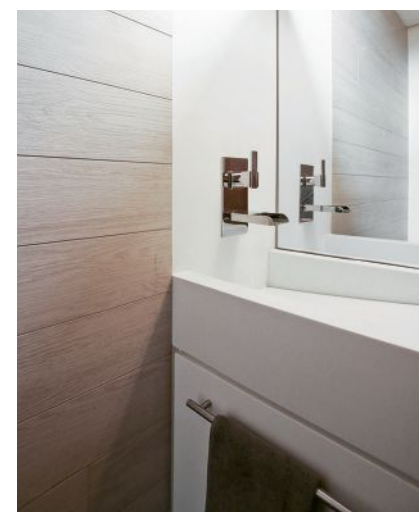
The new five-story townhouse responds to their request for abundant natural light and a strong connection to the outdoors—and the arrival of two sons born during the project’s five-year duration from demolition to completion. Clad in brick, cedar rainscreens, and black aluminum panels, it is respectful of the neighbors. The front façade steps back to align with the other townhouses on the block (the deeply set-back wood house next door is an anomaly), while the protruding three-story cedar volume acknowledges the apartment-house bay on the west.

Comprising 1,000 square feet on each floor, the house forms a fascinating collage in plan and section. The ground level contains a garage and mudroom, guest bedroom and bath, and a playroom that opens to the backyard. Pedestrians climb the wide brick block stoop and step into the foyer, where a wood-and-steel staircase supplies a modern interpretation of the classic townhouse typology. “Wherever the stoop is, that 4-to-8-foot zone pulls all the way through the house,” Joe says.

Elegant and logical, the interiors shift sectionally as one moves up through the house. On the first floor



This page and opposite: With its Escher-like maze of sunken levels, mezzanines, terraces, and overlooks, the house draws in abundant natural light. The stairwell's stack effect couples with top-level sliding doors to ventilate the home naturally.



is the social nucleus: an eat-in kitchen flanked by a dining area and a sunken living room, which rises to double height. The mezzanine above holds a movie pod cantilevered over the living room, an enclosed corner office, and a private balcony wrapped in cedar slats. Upstairs are the boys' bedrooms and the master suite and rear balcony, and on top is an art studio opening to north and south ipe decks. During the design, the clients added an elevator, rooftop vegetable garden and Jacuzzi, and a solar canopy that shades the art studio's south terrace.

While the typical brownstone is inward-looking, this one maximizes light and air. The stairwell and many operable windows create a stack effect as warm air escapes through large sliding glass doors on the top floor. With its glass railings and open treads made of Parallam-strand lumber, the staircase provides through-views to the terraces on each floor, connecting occupants to the world beyond. It also acts as a light shaft. Past the third-floor landing, a wall of frosted glass in the master bath softly illuminates the stairwell. "The clients requested a skylight in their





shower,” Joe says. “One way to do that was to push that piece out to allow light from above.” Top-floor terraces also funnel light into the 14-gauge hot-rolled steel staircase. “The black steel is dark, yet reflects light,” Joe says. “Its color and intensity changes over the day relative to the light.”

While the typical brownstone is inward-looking, this one maximizes light and air.

Interior Landscape

Other important details add to the experience of family-friendly living. In the bay on the main floor, a built-in sofa makes a strong connection to the street. A saltwater aquarium divides the kitchen and living room, where a custom teak sofa wraps three sides. Behind it, a wall of teak cabinetry stitches together the kitchen and living room and stretches up to the mezzanine “mosh pit,” as Joe calls it. In this plush spot, the family watches movies on a projector screen. It drops down from high on the opposite wall, where blackened steel shelving holds media equipment and a fireplace.

The cocoon-like movie pod was one of several interior elements that were redesigned for functionality and to balance the budget. The original concept of an egg-shaped fiberglass mold proved too expensive to build, so the teak millwork was extended upward to

This page: Hovering above the double-height living room, the movie “pod” contains built-in speakers and a projector that sends images to a drop-down screen above the fireplace.

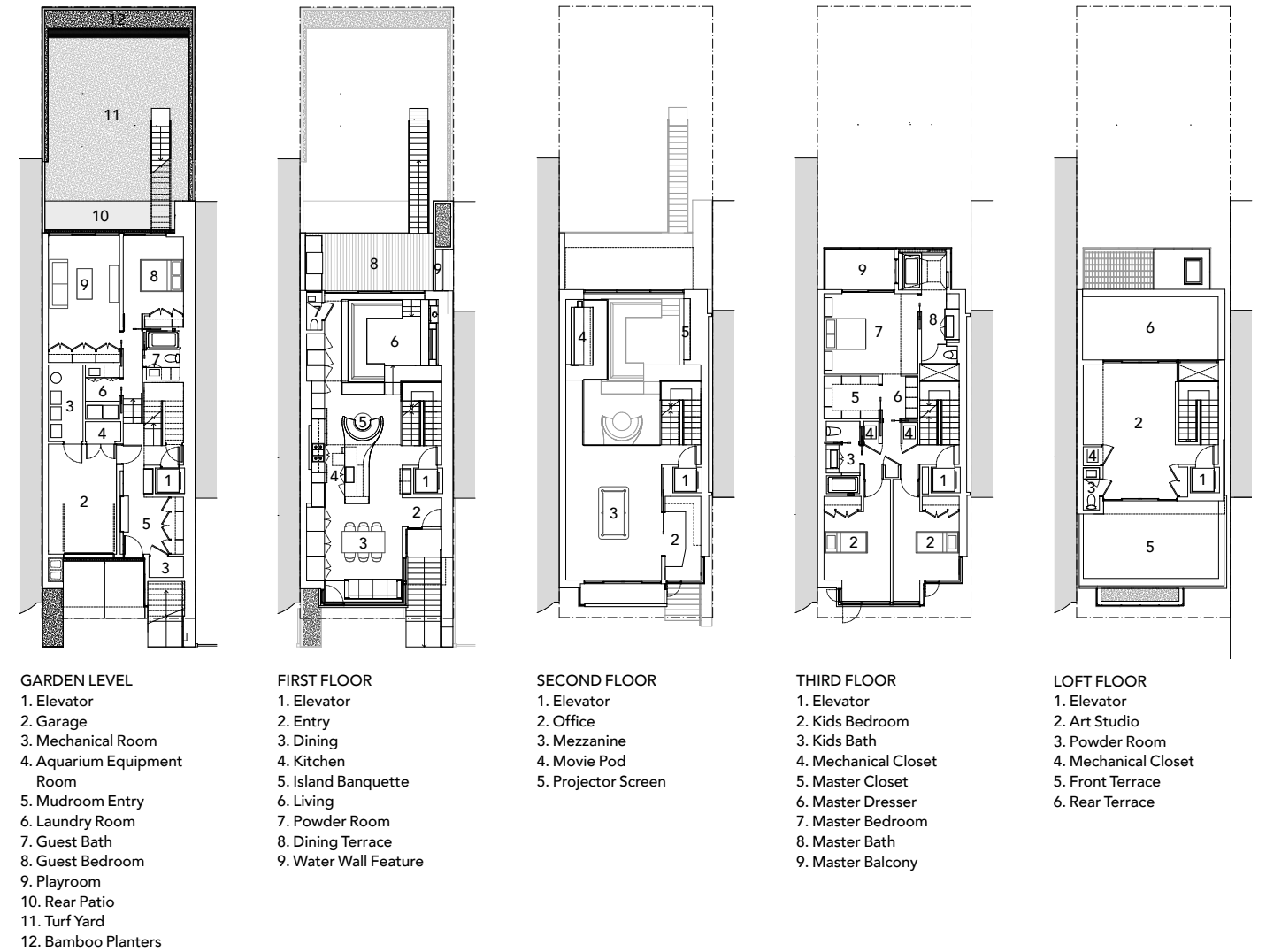


This page: Sliding screens on the second-floor mezzanine allow the office to close off from family activity or join in the hubbub.

create a C-shaped space with a built-in speaker and projector, says project architect Jessica Wilcock. During construction, the team also worked with a series of Corian fabricators to figure out the most economical way to build the circular banquette that flows out of the kitchen island—a central feature. “Heat-setting the Corian off-site was very expensive, so we found someone willing to use thinner Corian, a quarter-inch thick, and form it on-site over a shell that a millworker made out of framing and plywood,” she says. “That offered a pretty large cost saving.”

The green and blue palette—chartruse sofa and chairs, blue leather for the banquette—“talks to the aquarium.” Says Jessica, “The clients were constantly doing research and introducing playful, fun elements, like the

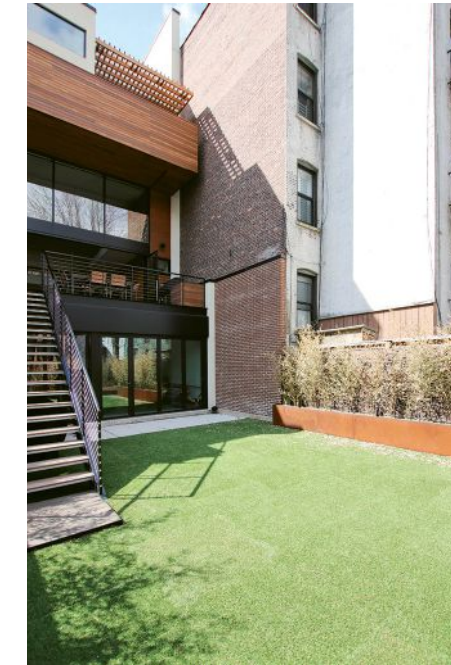
This page: The master suite and childrens’ bedrooms are on the fourth level of the five-level townhouse, but there’s an elevator for when the climb feels daunting.





saltwater aquarium. Originally it was designed as a pure glass volume with lighting inside, but we made a solid piece to hide the pipes, which run down to an equipment room on the lower level, and a top access panel for feeding and cleaning.”

Res4 created a cozy interior where the family enjoys gathering, plus a maintenance-free, tile-turf lawn where the kids can play ball even in the heart of the city. “The clients entertain quite a bit,” Joe says. “The kids and their cousins, kindergarteners, attend the school where my wife teaches. Some of the teachers overheard the cousins talking about a house with an aquarium in the middle, and they went on and on about the stair and the movie pod. It was funny to hear the cousins of these kids talking about how amazing the house is.” With its memorable amenities, striking street presence, and view out, the house provides a wide range of experiences in one urban-friendly package. ¹⁰⁰



This page: The hardworking ground level houses garage, guest quarters, kids’ playroom with access to a turfed backyard, mudroom, and laundry facilities.

Park Slope Townhouse

Brooklyn, New York

ARCHITECT: Principals-in-charge Joseph Tanney, AIA, and Robert Luntz, AIA; project architects Colin Murtaugh, AIA; Terrence Seah; Jessica Wilcock, Resolution: 4 Architecture, New York

BUILDER: Professional Grade Construction, Brooklyn, New York

PROJECT SIZE: 5,000 square feet

SITE SIZE: 0.06 acres

CONSTRUCTION COST: Withheld

PHOTOGRAPHY: Eric Soltan and Resolution: 4 Architecture

KEY PRODUCTS:

CLADDING: Omega-Lite Aluminum Panels, EIFS

COUNTERTOPS: DuPont Corian

COOKTOP: Wolf

DISHWASHER: Miele

DISPOSAL: Insinkerator

DOORS: Accurate, Grant

ELEVATOR: Handi-Lift

ENTRY DOOR HARDWARE: Schlage

FAUCETS: Hansgrohe, Speakman

FIREPLACE: Wittus

FLOORING: Graf Brothers Flooring engineered wood

HVAC: Carrier

LIGHTING: Juno

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS: Lutron

OVENS: Wolf

PAINTS/STAINS: Benjamin Moore

PHOTOVOLTAICS: SolarOne Solutions

RANGE: Wolf

REFRIGERATOR: Sub-Zero

SECURITY SYSTEMS: Alarms R Us, Honeywell

SINKS: Blanco Precision Microedge, WETSTYLE, Kohler

SKYLIGHTS: Wasco (VELUX Commercial)

TOILETS: TOTO

TUBS: Zuma

TURF TILES: Edel Grass

UNDERLAYMENT: Densglass sheathing

VENT HOOD: Miele

WASHER/DRYER: LG

WINDOW WALL SYSTEM: NanaWall