

Patterns *of* Home

THE *Ten*
ESSENTIALS
OF
ENDURING
DESIGN



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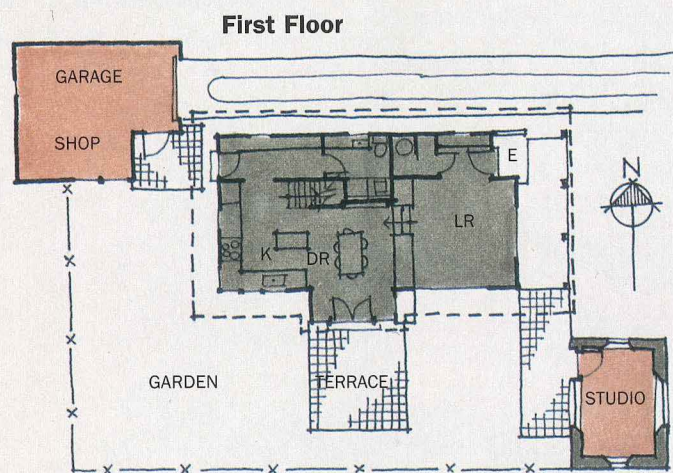
The Pattern in Miniature

The northern California residence is a large house on a large site; but this pattern can also be used to organize a small home on a small suburban lot. Shown here is a house by Oregon architects Rob Thallon and Jim Givens that includes a particularly rich blend of private and common space—from the scale of the site as a whole down to the organization of individual rooms.

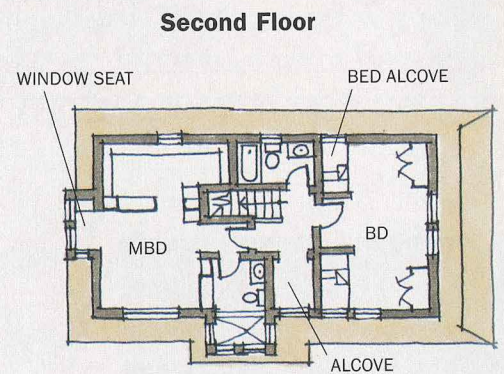
The plan reveals that the dining room is the social heart of the house. The neighboring spaces—the living room and kitchen—are extensions of the common core but also private edges. The private-most edges are the studio and shop on the ground floor and the private bedrooms above.



The dining room bumps out toward a terrace in the middle of the garden—the exterior equivalent of the interior common core. The studio beyond is a private space whose edge helps define the outdoor commons.



The garage/shop and the studio are the flanking wings; the dining room is the social heart, bounded by the semiprivate kitchen and living room.



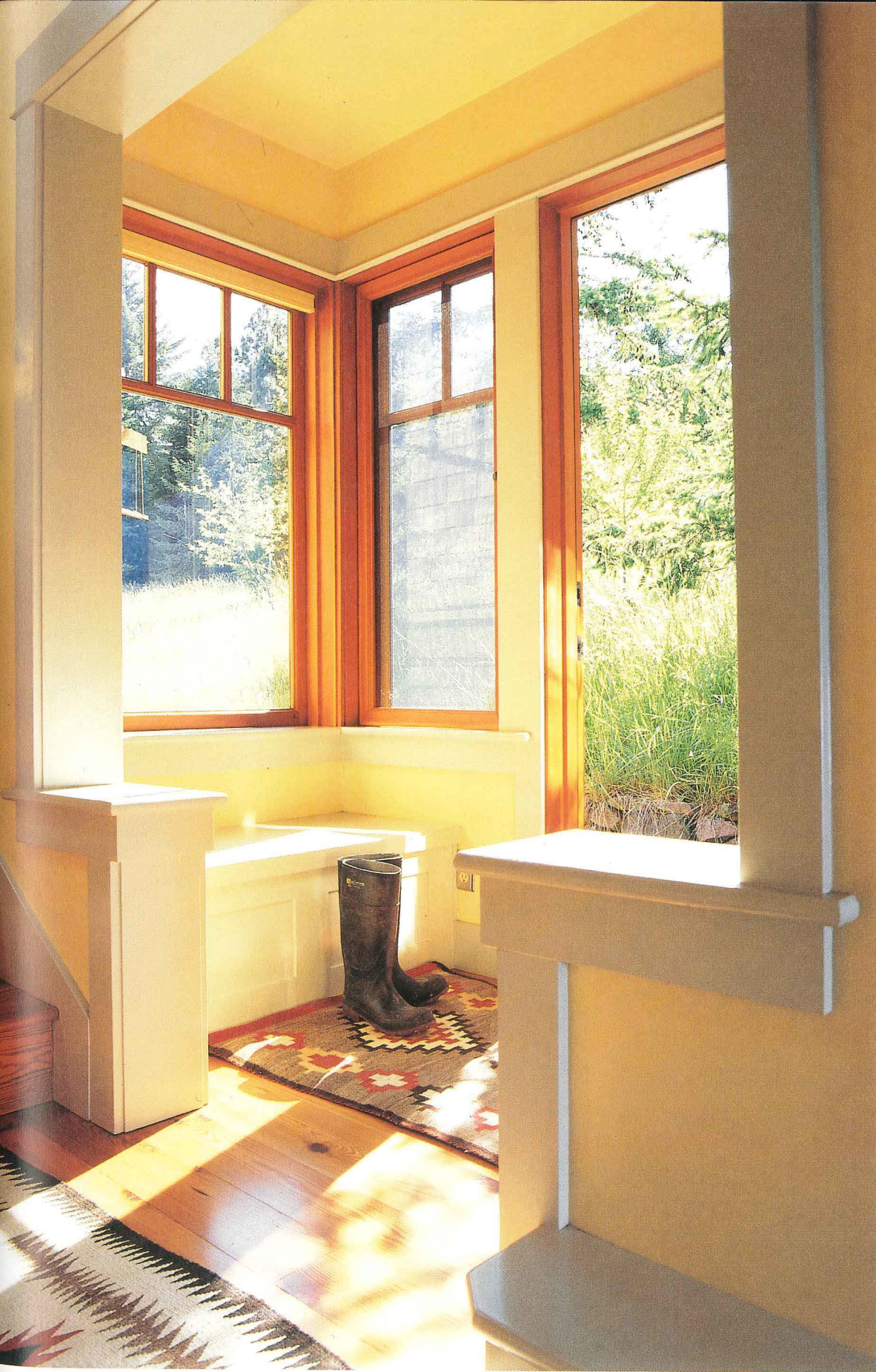
The children's room contains bed alcoves and closets that form the private edge.

The private bedrooms themselves have a common core: the small alcove at the top of the stairs, which is a place where, for example, a shared computer station might be placed. The two bedrooms offer versions of the pattern in miniature. The private window seat forms

the edge to the couple's bedroom; the children's bedroom, like the bedroom shown on p. 183, contains private bed alcoves and work spaces organized around a common core. ■



The half wall and the steps down from the central dining room define the living room (in the foreground) as the semiprivate edge off the common core.

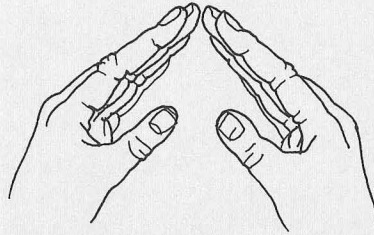


The stair landing also functions as a back-door entry room, providing access to the sloping grade behind the house.

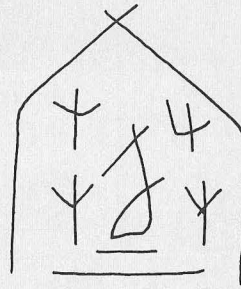
THE ROOF AS SYMBOL FOR HOME

The slope of a roof can be expressed in a great variety of ways. Relative steepness, shape, and material are all a matter of climate, tradition, and style; but the essence of this pattern is that the roof does slope and that the slope is experienced as containing the life of the building.

In the symbolic languages of nearly every culture there are instances of sloped roof form with deep associative meaning. In American Sign Language, for example, the sign for *home* begins with the sign for *roof*—two hands touching at the fingertips to form a gable. Similarly, the Chinese ideogram series for dwelling starts with a simple gable, and by adding a variety of symbols within, *roof* is transformed into “family,” “peace,” and “resting place.” The ideogram for *cold* shows a roof sheltering a man on a mat with firewood.



IN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE, THE SIGN FOR HOME BEGINS WITH THE SIGN FOR ROOF.



THE CHINESE IDEOGRAM FOR COLD

ridge tell us that the roof is lived in. As in a child's drawing of a house, the simple peaked roof speaks of home, suggesting a warm, enclosed space within. Stepping out on the balcony, residents again inhabit the roof, experiencing the intricate and beautiful framing above and around them. As with the entry overhang, the strong projection of the balcony roof, well beyond the front of the balcony, protects the space from south sun and storms and gives the whole building a memorable image of roof and shelter.

A CASCADING ROOF

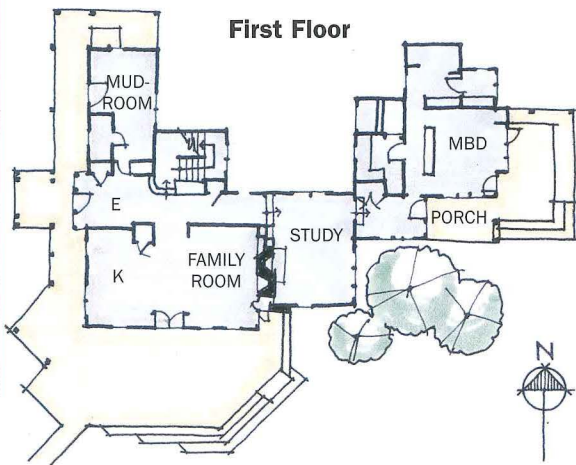
In contrast to the down-sloping Berkeley house, the site of the Apter house in Oregon (see the photo at right), designed by Rob Thallon and Dave Edrington, reveals a great deal of the roof as we approach, providing another illustration of how this pattern works. In this case, the roof plan is made to follow the informal meanderings of the

The roof of this house informally follows its plan, cascading down the site, expressing the move from higher ceiled common spaces to lower private ones.



ROOF PLAN FOLLOWS FLOOR PLAN

The floor plan responds to the site, following the dripline of the trees at the edge of the woods. The roof follows suit, gently stepping down the slope.



floor plan, laid out in response to the treeline of a forest to the north. The basic roof unit is a simple gable roof. But coupled with dormers and shaped to step down and around the site, this simple form creates a rich and lively shape.

The cascading form suggests the flow of the floor plan within, from the larger higher-ceilinged common spaces at the center of the house to the smaller and lower private ones at the edge. In this sense, the roof follows and expresses the intimacy flow of the house, placing the highest ceilings and roofs above the most public and populated rooms, and culminating in the low roof above the one-story master bedroom at the east end of the house with its private porch and study. The roof over the master bedroom forms a tiny habitable attic off the second-floor children's bedroom, and "hips out" to give shelter to the porch, a gesture that can be seen and felt from the interior.

The roof steps down

toward the east, culminating in the roof over the master bedroom, which opens out to a sheltered porch.



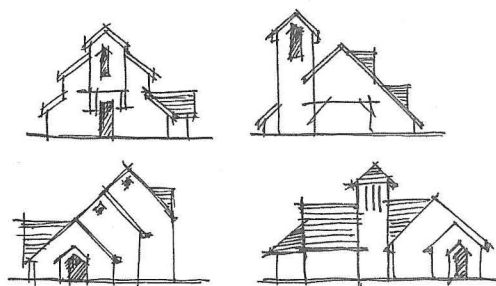
The ceiling over the master bedroom is low and flat, in part to allow the higher attic space above to be inhabited by the children's bedroom. (The tiny gable-end window of the children's attic play space is visible in the photo on the facing page.)



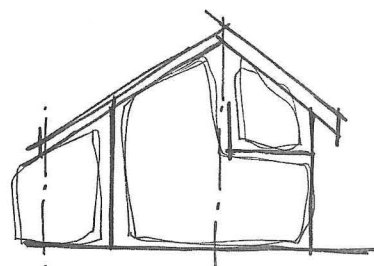
WORKING WITH THE PATTERN

Whether the house is large or small, with simple or complex roof shapes, the roof should be visible and sloped, cascading down from high to low.

- *Fit the most important social spaces of the plan*—for example, entry, eating, bedrooms—to the roof. Let the form of the roof center these spaces, so that living in the house you feel as though, in some fashion, you are living in the roof.
- *Let the roof plan grow* from a traditional and elementary roof form, so that, by nesting, stretching, stacking, and compressing, a large house may be understood as a combination or transformation of a simple primitive roof.
- *Use a roof to mark the entry* and inform a visitor about the path into the house.
- *Make some spaces atticlike*, with the roof shape—perhaps even the roof frame—visible.
- *Make sure the roof can be experienced* from inside *and* outside. In some places, let it be high, visible, and beyond reach; in others, low, inviting, and touchable. Where possible, make spaces in and on the roof—roof gardens or terraces.
- *Use the naturally high and low portions* of the roof to create a variety of interior ceiling heights, with higher ceilings over larger spaces and lower ceilings over smaller spaces.
- *Use overhangs to shade and protect walls* and openings but also to create sheltered outdoor places and covered paths.



Larger homes can be compositions, combining and transforming simple roof forms.



Use the naturally high and low portions of the roof to create a variety of interior ceiling heights and let the ceiling height variety reinforce the relative intimacy of each space.



The flow through rooms begins at the street; plan circulation outdoors as carefully as indoors.

In rainy Oregon, a covered walk to the entry is greatly valued. Here, the walkway travels along the edge of a generous outdoor room: a garden that introduces visitors to the house as they approach the front door.

to find than number 201, often hidden in the plantings. Gateways, fences, a colonnade of trees, a lamp post, are all ways to create identity and differentiate this house from all others.

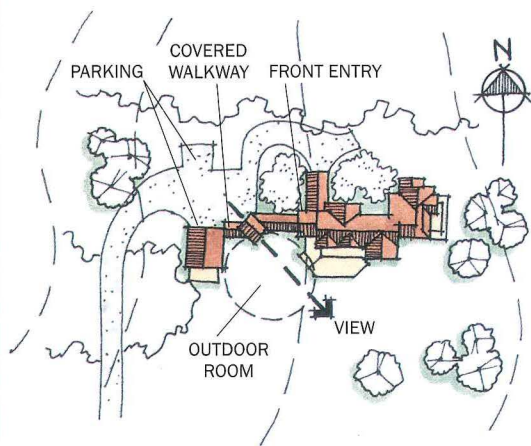
Once the house is located, it is important both to provide a clear sense of how to approach the house (where to park the

car, what door to walk toward) and to create boundaries that can be experienced from a car—for example, passage through a hedge or transition onto a different paving material. The breezeway at the Apter house by Thallon and Edrington, Architects (shown above) addresses these issues by providing a covered walkway between the front entry of the house and the garage. It features both a direct garage connection and a pedestrian gateway—a very visible gabled roof at an angle to the walk and the guest parking area—and it creates a clear edge between the zone of the car and the garden.

Residents and visitors typically arrive at a house by car—a pattern that doesn't reflect how people lived when most house forms evolved. Traditional homes typically had a well-marked front door, used by visitors and for formal occasions, and a back door, often opening onto a porch connecting the kitchen to the garden, used for daily coming and going. In many homes today, the garage has replaced the back door, and the front door is positioned as if most visitors would arrive by foot. The result is that residents arrive through a utilitarian garage and guests are puzzled about where to park their cars and unclear about how to enter. The car connection for both visitors and guests deserves as much attention as the front entry. One solution to this predicament is presented in "Park and Enter" on the facing page.

CREATING THE CAR CONNECTION

The pedestrian gateway, placed at an angle to the rest of the walk, defines the entry and offers a contained view into the large outdoor room to the south of the house.



A WELCOMING MAIN ENTRY

A visible and appealing main entry both orients and welcomes. There are three critical design issues to consider: first, to make it intuitively clear where the main entrance is located; second, to define a route that feels natural and relatively direct; and, third, to create an exterior look that is one of the most memorable images of the building. At the