

# QC

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EXCLUSIVE

## THE DESIGN ISSUE

Inside NFL star Greg Olsen's home, Heirloom Companies craftsmanship, Treehouse Masters' owl library, Mudwerks wall art, and a peek into the spaces that mean the most to Charlotte's best interior designers.





# A HOUSE THAT IS A HOME

For a young family that takes nothing for granted, finally a new home focused entirely on loving and cherishing their children

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*photos by* METROPOLIS ICONIC SHOTS



AS SOON AS YOU STEP INSIDE THE OLSEN’S NEW home there is a palatable aura of understated grandeur, minimalist style and visual calmness. The exact kind of feeling you get when you enter a resort aimed at pleasing all your senses. “We travel a lot,” explains Kara Olsen, “We wanted that Colorado mountain resort feel. Cozy, but with a light and open, airy feel of a ranch home.”

The property is situated indigenously with its surroundings and faces a lake with a large fountain. “Peter Leeke found this lot for us and we fell in love with it right away,” adds Greg Olsen. “It is hard to have both convenience and privacy. But Kingswood pulled it off.” This is the second time that the Leekees have worked with the Olsens, but this project would be entirely different. This time they

started from scratch and Kara was involved in the entire design concept and detailing decisions. This was an opportunity for the couple to make their home nothing short of perfect.

The Olsen family has certain lifestyle needs that were considered in the home design phase. Greg is 6’5” and Kara is 5’9”. “We’re pretty sure the odds are that our kids will be tall as well!” laughs Kara. The house features a lot of overhead space with mostly a combination of 10-13’ vaulted ceilings. The scale feels like a modern castle. Without a doubt, their focus is all about their children first and foremost. There are two kids’ lounge areas, one by their bedrooms and another near the kitchen with an adjacent craft room “so I can keep an eye on them” explains Kara. A curved wall entrance to the children’s bedroom suite





allows for light to stream in from the pool courtyard. There is no shortage of natural light in this home, which for two outdoorsy people, is hugely satisfying.

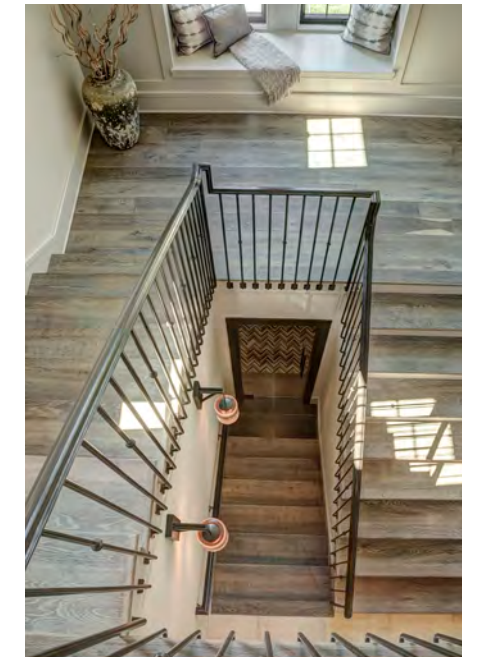
The Olsens like to host and entertain their parents, family, friends, players and their wives. To accommodate that, the upper level boasts two separate guest suites (the ‘Chicago’ guest room and the ‘Beach’ guest room) and a lady’s lounge opposite a man cave media room

and bar that showcases Greg’s NFL game collection. There is a shared linear crystal fireplace between the guy and gal hangouts and a cigar deck overlooking the pool. “Did Kara tell you that we have root beer on draft in the bar for the kids?” beams Greg.

For certain, the driving force in designing the structure was that the Olsens wanted to be closer to their kids than they had been in their previous home that Kingswood had reno-







vated for them. Usually families look to separate the master suite from the children's rooms often by floor level or opposite sides of a floorplan, but that was the exact opposite of what they wanted. The solution was to have the children's suite and master bedroom suite located in a shared wing on the ground level with a short hallway between them for easy access. "I really love the way this turned out and I think it is nice that we have our guest suites and entertainment rooms upstairs—

separate from the main flow of the house. As a family with young children, we spend most of our time on the ground level like you would in a ranch-style home," observes Kara.

"Despite the clean simplicity of this 7,000-sq.-ft. home, it is in fact a very complex structure," says Peter Leeke. It is a unique horse shoe shaped craftsman-style home by JJ Barja, Elite Design Group. It features a 2nd floor deck, vaulted ceilings with 22' beams, a below ground wine cellar



and a reinforced professional gym floor with diamond plate walls. The property is designed with a separate standing garage building that added room for another car with storage above. That structure helps form a porte-cochère entrance to a courtyard for the family to play basketball and other games.

It is impossible not to notice the focal point of the home: the pool deck. The home takes full advantage of this with walls of windows facing it from all sides. Another departure from the typical approach in home design is that the entrance

everywhere: the floating silver antique beam design in the dining room, the attention grabbing light fixtures, the media room and bar juxtaposed with antique and modern details and an oversize double shower (steam and regular) in the pool bath. The vintage hardwood flooring is her hallmark: steam-treated. The hardware is soft gold, and the doors custom-designed and built. The various wall coverings are hand-finished by Phillip Jeffries. One less obvious feature she added is how the master bath fills with water from a flush valve



foyer is part of the main foot traffic pathway that connects the side wings of the home and centers squarely on an inviting open dining room layout. The pool deck and outdoor living space is symmetrically centered behind it, providing a wonderful horizon line image from the front to the back of the property. Everywhere you look, you see the bright aqua blue pool, hot tub and fire pit. It feels like a vacation.

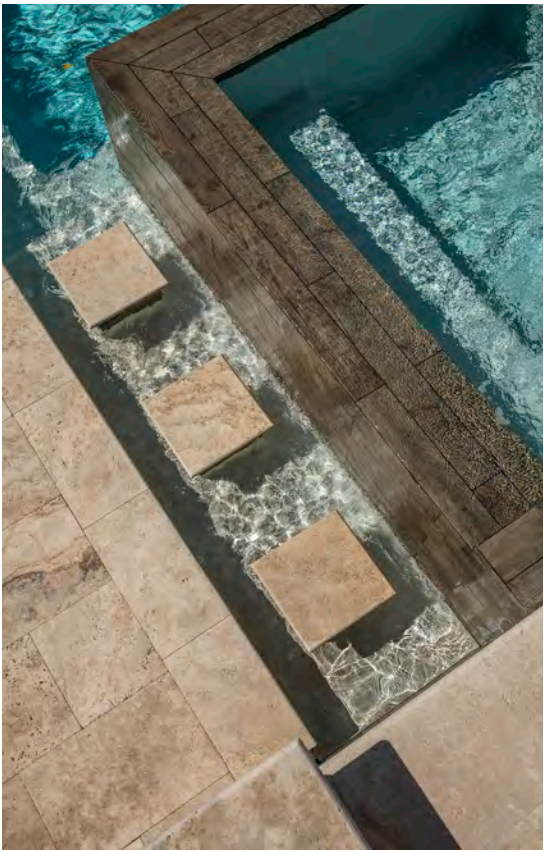
All the interior design was handled by Louise Leeke and her signature touches are visible

in the ceiling: the water is oxygenated to prevent splashing and strategically placed over the tub for the quietest fall.

The furnishings, artwork, accessories, and Phillip Jeffries wall coverings were also carefully curated to work in concert with Louise's styling by Layton Campbell, JLayer Interiors. There is a distinctive blend of materials throughout including the exterior as well: rich dark cedar shakes and trim paint with a vanilla colored stucco, a natural cedar shake roof, and







Indiana limestone. The overall effect relaxes the mind and feels utterly organic and down-to-earth—just like the Olsens themselves.

“One thing we definitely depended on was Louise guiding us on where to spend and not,” shared Kara. It is a common pitfall for homeowners building their dream homes, especially with all the décor resource magazines, and online sites available to them. “The main thing about building with Kingswood is that we like working with Peter and Louise. It’s just that simple. The house was built in a year and we had 100% confidence in the process. It was just an awesome experience,” concluded Greg. Fondest memory? Kara overheard the twins playing pretend builders: Talbot was Ms. Louise and TJ was Mr. Jason (project manager, Jason Hughes).

★ For a bit more info:  
[kingswoodcustomhomes.com](http://kingswoodcustomhomes.com)  
[elitedesigngroup.com](http://elitedesigngroup.com)  
[jlaytoninteriors.com](http://jlaytoninteriors.com)



### *A Passion To Help*

#### **The HEARTest Yard**

Kara and Greg launched this campaign to help other families battling Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS) “We wanted to set up a structure that provided an in-home nurse, free of charge, to these families,” Greg explains, “because we found that was such a powerful tool and resource in our own lives.” Every HLHS family receives up to 460 hours in free in-home nursing care between the first and second surgeries. To donate visit [receptionsforresearch.org](http://receptionsforresearch.org)