

THE TEXAS

We shifted gears for the **2018 Idea House** and headed to Austin, where we rounded up the best design minds in town to tackle an entire home makeover

DEFINING MOMENT
The original stairs had to be enlarged to meet building codes. Architects Chris Sanders and Jena Hammond solved the issue by disguising the expansion with a new archway below the landing.



TURNAROUND

by ZOË GOWEN / photographs by HECTOR MANUEL SANCHEZ / styling by BUFFY HARGETT MILLER

Cozy Shade

Try this cool hue (Privilege Green, SW 6193; sherwin-williams.com).

BALANCING ACT

"I wanted this room to be versatile," says designer Meredith Ellis. "I made sure to select good bones to start with: a traditional wooden dining table, bold but classic draperies, and upholstered walls for a great backdrop." Building on that foundation, Meredith says she layered in a seagrass rug to "freshen up the room," added slipcovered chairs "for a little touch of feminine," and hung the Coleen & Company Sarafina Chandelier in a verdigris finish to "tone everything down."



A

s we started planning the 2018 Idea House, we had a few specific visions for the project: We wanted to do a real home makeover (rather than build new construction); we had our eyes—and hearts—set on Austin, Texas; and we were determined to complete the renovation with the best local talent. And so it began. First, we picked our Lone Star State dream team—including Hill Country native and designer Meredith Ellis, who spent over a decade decorating in New York and LA with Bunny Williams and Michael Smith before returning home with her husband, Hunter Ellis, who runs operations for her other business, James Showroom; Chris Sanders, the whip-smart architect originally from Lufkin, Texas, with a few dozen remodels under his belt; and David and Catherine Wilkes, the husband-and-wife contracting duo who have made careers overseeing hundreds of down-to-the-studs renovations in Austin. Our next step was to set the criteria for choosing the right property: It was important to have “quick access to downtown, be in a good school district, and be about 3,000 to 4,000 square feet with space for four bedrooms and four baths so a family could live comfortably,” recalls Hunter.

TOUR THE HOUSE

Dates and times: Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday until November 8, 2018.
Admission: Tickets available for \$20 both online (slideahouse.showclix.com) and at the door; free for children 12 and under. A portion of the proceeds from tickets will benefit Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas.
Address: 6401 Rusty Ridge Drive, Austin, TX 78731

After viewing 35 houses with an agent and combing neighborhoods for any “For Sale by Owner” signs, Meredith finally found “the one” while she was checking real estate websites at 4:36 a.m. “The listing had posted at 4:30 a.m., and it struck me as having potential,” she remembers. Once the entire team agreed that this home (which is located in the Northwest Hills area of town) had good bones and plenty of room for improvement, everyone went to work on a tighter-than-normal timeline (four months—from January to May) to meet our magazine deadlines. “There were sleepless nights,” admits David. But this year’s fantastic fixer-upper was worth a little insomnia.

DOUBLE UP
 Two Hunter Original outdoor fans and four fixtures from Carolina Lanterns & Lighting signify traditional Southern hominess on the front porch.



Table Not Required

This ottoman has built-in drink holders (Taylor Tray Ottoman; jamesshowroom.com).

Before & After

FAMILY ROOM

THE FAMILY ROOM Hangout Spot

Located in an open space that's opposite the kitchen and wedged between the foyer and the sunroom, this area called for tricky decorating maneuvers. “I had to make it work with the kitchen, but I wanted the family room to be its own separate space so someone in here could comfortably watch TV,” says Meredith. The solution? Concentrate on a mostly blue palette to set apart the area, and devise a crowd-pleasing furniture plan. She faced the large chesterfield sofa by Moss Studio (it seats up to four comfortably) toward the large fireplace to create a division between the family room and kitchen island, but she turned the patterned club chairs (1077-01 Chair by Lee Industries covered in Schuyler Samperton Textiles' Nellcote in Sky) toward the kitchen to facilitate conversation with the cook.

THE PROBLEM Hemmed in by a poorly planned den addition that ran across the back of the house and a barely used breakfast room, the old living room was too closed off for today's open-concept lifestyle.

THE FIX Eliminate the breakfast room, and incorporate those spaces into a more casual family room that connects to the kitchen. The den wall was taken down, and the space was reappropriated as a sunroom, filling the main living area with more light.



SOUTHERN VANITY
Kendra Scott's Signature Large Tumbler Candle and Bright Coral Nail Lacquer add to the ladylike vibe.

THE GIRL'S ROOM Vintage Find

"This distinctive iron bed was in a New York City design show house in the 1970s. I found it at the Original Round Top Antiques Fair and had to have it," says Meredith. Using the palm-topped four-poster bed as the room's kick-starter, the designer continued the look of girlie whimsy by covering the walls in a soft pink fabric (Siam in Shell by Carolina Irving Textiles). "The pattern helps disguise the sharp angles of the walls," she says. To make space for two full baths upstairs, the sinks are placed outside of each bath. Creating a vanity from an old bamboo-detailed chest (above) helps it blend with the bedroom.

THE BOY'S ROOM Shipshape

Located on the top floor, the boy's and girl's rooms are both long and narrow with sloped ceilings. While not ideal for decorating, irregular spaces like this can give a home charm. Meredith and Chris embraced that notion by treating the boy's room like a ship's quarters, covering the angled ceiling with beaded board painted glossy taupe (Repose Gray, SW 7015; sherwin-williams.com) for a nautical look. Sticking with that theme, she selected twin beds (Suzanne Kasler Sophie Headboard; ballarddesigns.com) dressed in masculine navy, brown, and white.



HIGH DRAMA
"To max out the impact of an upholstered headboard, match it to the bed skirt," advises Meredith.

SHOP LIKE
MEREDITH

For a list of the home's furnishings, go to southernliving.com/ideahouse or download our app, Southern Living Idea House, from iTunes.



BLUE NOTE
The walls are clad with James Hardie's Artisan V-Groove siding and painted in Sherwin-Williams' Cyberspace (SW 7076) for some utilitarian charm.

THE MUDROOM Drop Zone

"In a city like Austin, you're outdoors all the time, so families need a place for storing a lot of gear," says Chris, who maxed out the hallway that connects the back door to the kitchen. Within this one space, he fit a washer and dryer (not shown), a row of cubbies with accessible open storage below and closed cabinets overhead, and a dog food station. "It's nice to have a place to close off the mess from the rest of the house," Chris says.

Idea To Steal

Hide holders for pet food and water bowls in the toe kick at the bottom of cabinetry, and insert food bins into large pull-out cabinets.



THE PANTRY Easy Access

As the demand for open floor plans rises, so does the need for convenient auxiliary spaces like this 6- by 6-foot walk-in pantry to stash your things. After hunting for attractive storage ideas, Meredith actually copied the grain bins from her childhood home. She used

glass-front drawers (they're a customized version of the kitchen's Henlow Square Inset from Wellborn Cabinet, Inc.). "It's how my mother did our pantry growing up. We had one for beans, one for potatoes, and so on. It was such a cool design element and kept the counters clear," she adds, noting that the decorative plate rack also has a purpose. "There's always a need to store extra dishes that people tend to collect over time but don't use every day. This way, you can display them so you don't forget you have them."



Idea To Steal

Skip cafe lines with Thermador's 24-Inch Fully Automatic Built-in Coffee Machine and refrigerated drawers stocked with milk, juice, and water.

