

WINTER 2025

# retrofit *Home*

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PHOTOS: Andrea Calo unless otherwise noted





## A Claustrophobic 1980s Townhome Is Opened to Reveal a Spacious Modern Paradise

By Susan Jenks

The homeowner primarily chose the unit for its stunning views. The retrofit used thoughtful structural changes to invite the views indoors.

The homeowner of this 4-story, 2,800-square-foot townhome primarily chose the space because it overlooked Lake Austin in Austin, Texas, and the distinctive Pennybacker Bridge.

However, the structurally and aesthetically outdated 1980s townhome continuously revealed new challenges, demanding forward-thinking solutions that met HOA constraints.

With architectural and design plans approved, Texas Construction Company was selected as general contractor. The Austin-based team delivered next-level problem-solving and expertise to create a sophisticated, low-maintenance residence that left the '80s firmly in the past.

### Reinventing an Outdated Floorplan

The townhome's outdated design and materials posed significant issues that had to be addressed before any modern enhancements could be made.

- The floor plan was closed and compartmentalized with outdated finishes that limited the breathtaking views.
- The mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems had reached the end of their lifespans and required replacement.
- The framing—while meeting the standards of its time—was undersized and lacked the durability to support the open, spacious layout envisioned in the new design.
- Alignment issues throughout the structure left walls and floors that were neither level nor plumb.
- Outside, the existing stucco did not include proper drainage mats or flashing details, which created significant sheathing rot.
- The hillside location and height of the building complicated the logistics of demolition, framing, and stucco work. Scaffolding the rear of the building became the most cost-effective solution to manage these tasks safely.



BEFORE PHOTOS: Texas Construction Company

BEFORE





Above: The existing main living area was large but felt dark and contained. New sliders, which required substantial structural support, achieve the spaciousness the homeowner was seeking.

Left: The original staircase design established a dark, walled-in entryway, but the reimagined layout includes an airy staircase that creates a flowing, welcoming space.



## Navigating HOA Restrictions

A first challenge was adhering to strict HOA guidelines, which required the townhome's envelope to align visually with the other units in the complex. This meant that certain design changes needed to be negotiated.

For example, the HOA initially resisted the addition of balcony lighting and changes to the railing design. However, through negotiation, the homeowner was able to introduce minor exterior updates that not only modernized the unit, but also were well-received by neighbors, who later adopted similar enhancements.

To ensure durability, the outdated stucco was replaced with an assembly that included proper flashings, weeps, weatherproofing and drainage mats—upgrades that drastically improved the weather resistance and longevity of the exterior. The new materials also aligned with contemporary building standards, providing improved moisture management and better insulation.



The kitchen had been closed off and separated. The new layout fully maximizes the space and view and, with new marble surfaces, soundproofing maintains serenity.



### Opening the Interior

The townhome’s main floor was reimagined to create a more open, seamless connection between the indoors and outdoors. This design choice allowed an uninterrupted view from the front door straight through to the expansive back patio, overlooking the lake and bridge.

To achieve this effect, the renovation included the installation of large slider doors to the patio. These doors, however, introduced new challenges: To create substantial openings for the doors, structural steel supports were needed to reinforce the load-bearing walls. This required the deconstruction of the entire rear wall and temporary supports for the floor joists.

It was worth the effort. The result was a spacious, airy main floor where the patio and living room flow effortlessly into one another, creating a unified space ideal for entertaining or relaxation.

One of the design goals was to create a minimalist, elegant staircase that didn’t obstruct views through the unit. The original staircase remained in its location, but modifications included removing a dividing wall on the second story, allowing for a more open line of sight across the unit to the lake. Brass-capped stair rails and dramatic wood panel accents were added, creating a sophisticated focal point that harmonizes

with the overall design aesthetic.

The third-floor primary suite also was redesigned to maximize the panoramic lake views. A second set of slider doors was installed to open the suite to a sleek sitting area, providing a tranquil spot to enjoy the scenery.

A new luxurious ensuite bathroom includes a standalone bathtub, large shower and wall of windows for the same sweeping lake views as the sitting area. To accommodate a spacious walk-in closet, an addition was built over the garage, further enhancing the suite’s functionality and appeal.

**The structurally and aesthetically outdated 1980s townhome continuously revealed new challenges, demanding forward-thinking solutions that met HOA constraints.**





Above: A second set of large slider doors transforms the primary bedroom into a luxurious suite.  
Below: An addition over the garage created space for an enviable walk-in closet.



## Integrating Modern Technology

In keeping with the homeowner's vision of a modern pied-à-terre, the townhome was outfitted with smart-home technology for lighting, climate control and security.

A lighting system was installed that allows the homeowner to control lighting scenes from an app, adapting brightness and mood based on different times of day and activities. The wireless system reduced the need for additional cabling, simplifying the retrofit while expanding versatility and functionality.

The HVAC system was upgraded to a zoned setup, allowing temperature control for each floor independently. This zoning ensures that the homeowner can maintain comfort across multiple levels without requiring extensive ductwork or compromising the new design aesthetic.

Other essential systems also were upgraded during the retrofit: New plumbing replaced aging water and



BEFORE

The primary bath combines nature and elegance with a dramatic wall of windows and high-end finishes.




wastewater lines, and natural gas was added to the home to support updated appliances. The electrical system was overhauled with new wiring, subpanels and main panels to accommodate modern power demands. Ventilation was enhanced, providing cleaner air and better energy efficiency.

In addition, soundproofing was a key consideration, particularly in a multi-story, shared-wall setting. Additional insulation was added between floors and along shared walls with neighboring units, significantly enhancing privacy and sound attenuation.

With new marble surfaces in the kitchen and living room, these soundproofing measures also helped reduce echo and noise transfer between levels, creating a serene interior environment.

### The Finished Look

With the technical challenges resolved, the final design embraces the homeowner's warm yet sophisticated aesthetic, blending luxurious materials with meticulous detailing. High-gloss millwork, dark wood floors, brass accents and marble surfaces create a refined look that is modern and timeless.

Today, this townhome is an elegant, low-maintenance lakeside retreat, seamlessly combining advanced modern features with timeless design. The transformation is a testament to the potential of even the most challenging retrofit projects when vision, technical expertise and innovative solutions come together. 

#### Retrofit Team

**General Contractor:** Texas Construction Company, [txconstruct.com](http://txconstruct.com)

- Royce Flournoy

**Interior Designer:** Maison & Bouquet, [www.mandbinteriors.com](http://www.mandbinteriors.com)

- Christina Shipley

#### Materials

**Large Slider Doors:** LaCantina, [www.lacantinadoors.com](http://www.lacantinadoors.com)

**Lighting System:** Legrand, [www.legrand.us](http://www.legrand.us)

**Zoned HVAC:** Trane, [www.trane.com](http://www.trane.com)

**Outdoor Railing:** Steel House Mfg., [www.steelhousemfg.com](http://www.steelhousemfg.com)

**Walk-in Closet System:** California Closets, [www.californiaclosets.com](http://www.californiaclosets.com)

**Standalone Tub:** Victoria + Albert, [houseofrohl.com/victoria-and-albert](http://houseofrohl.com/victoria-and-albert)

**Bathroom Fixtures:** Newport Brass, [www.newportbrass.com](http://www.newportbrass.com)

**Dishwasher:** Bosch, [www.bosch-home.com](http://www.bosch-home.com)

**Refrigerator and Freezer:** Thermador, [www.thermador.com/us](http://www.thermador.com/us)

**Ice Machine:** Scotsman, [www.scotsman-ice.com](http://www.scotsman-ice.com)

**Range, Hood and Outdoor Gas Grill:** Wolf, [www.subzero-wolf.com](http://www.subzero-wolf.com)

**Drawer Refrigerator and Bar Fridge:** U-Line, [www.u-line.com](http://www.u-line.com)

**Drawer Microwave:** Sharp, [www.sharppusa.com](http://www.sharppusa.com)

**Wine Cooler:** Sub-Zero, [www.subzero-wolf.com](http://www.subzero-wolf.com)

**Washer and Dryer:** Electrolux, [www.electrolux.com](http://www.electrolux.com)