



Dwell+ Exclusive

Budget Breakdown: The Roof Turns Rainwater Into Garden Pools at This \$2.7M Washington Home

A path raised above plantings connects the residence with a workshop, which gives the aging owners space for creative pursuits.

Text by
Lauren Jones



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For a couple nearing retirement, relocating from Virginia to Snohomish County, Washington, offered the chance to be closer to their son in Seattle and build a forever home with dedicated workshops for their creative pursuits: woodworking and metalworking for him, weaving, glassblowing, and gardening for her. Architect Matt Wittman of Wittman Estes crafted a serene single-level residence, designed to function as much for daily living as for making, with aging in place at its core. "It was important for them to do it right and for the long term," says Wittman.



A Virginia couple nearing retirement hired Wittman Estes to build a home in Snohomish, Washington, where they could be near their son and work on creative pursuits.

Photo by Andrew Pogue

Photo Categories: outdoor, walkways, garden, gardens

The four-and-a-half-acre property, once an animal sanctuary, sits next to a wetland and is threaded by a stream, where songbirds, hawks, deer, and frogs animate the peaceful environment. The sloping site has a 37-foot elevation change from north to south, yet it's barely detectable. "We raised the workshop to the north and the house is sunken on the south," Wittman explains. "In between we created one level where the owners can move with ease."



Floor-to-ceiling windows in the dining and living areas help capture the beauty of the site.

Photo by Andrew Pogue

Photo Categories: dining room, table, concrete floors, chair

The house and separate workshop are connected by sheltered walkways, gardens, and patios that celebrate the site, another must-have for the couple, who knew they wanted to work with a firm that specialized in both architecture and landscape design. "They wanted a landscape house, and were drawn to our work for its focus on indoor/outdoor living and its integration with garden and nature," says Wittman.

Editors' Note: Labor costs are included in each figure below.

\$22,169
Demolition & Disposal

\$213,725
Earthwork

\$369,489
Concrete

\$342,552
Envelope
(Siding, Sheathing & Insulation)

\$479,663
Framing

\$103,000
Flooring
(Slab on grade)

\$138,678
Roofing

\$128,314
Electrical

\$73,847
Plumbing

\$58,681
HVAC

\$26,206
Planting

\$148,196
Finish Carpentry

\$17,716
Lighting

\$109,683
Cabinetry

\$68,980
Countertops

\$210,305
Windows

\$14,231
Exterior Doors

\$22,904
Metalwork

\$149,317
Interior Finishes

\$9,275
Permitting

Grand Total: **\$2,706,931**



Wittman calls the couple a Jack and Jill of all trades due to their wide-ranging hobbies. In the workshop, there's a glass-art studio and woodshop connected by a room for model making and storing collections.

Photo by Andrew Pogue



A walkway threads through a central garden.



When it rains, water spilling off the roofs creates reflecting pools.

The workshop, positioned to buffer the main house from street noise, features north-facing clerestory windows that bring in even, diffused light throughout the day, reducing glare and ensuring true color clarity. The buildings are arranged around a courtyard, where roofs route water into a series of reflecting pools. "When it rains, the water cascades over the edge of the roofs, evenly sheeting into the garden," Wittman says. Inspired by the ancient Roman concept of the impluvium, the pools transform the site's 35 inches of average annual rainfall into a design feature. "Instead of working against the climate, we expressed it so the owners can engage with it," says Wittman.



In the kitchen, navy cabinetry pairs with terrazzo countertops.

Another program-driver was the need for accessibility. The single-level layout eliminates stairs, while terracing allows the home to nestle into the slope. Wide doorways, flush thresholds, and sandblasted concrete floors ensure safe, nonslip circulation, while a flexible guest suite anticipates multigenerational use.



The primary bathroom has a nonslip, curbless shower. Grab bars and rails can easily be added.

Inside, materials were selected both to reflect the couple's artistic leanings and to support aging eyes and bodies. Contrasting textures such as fir and cedar sourced from nearby mills, terrazzo, and concrete create a grounded feel while aiding with

depth perception; reddish-brown soffits and a bold blue kitchen wall bring playfulness. Cast-in-place concrete floors with hydronic radiant heating extend to the patios and walkways.



The wood slats in the living room were fabricated on-site by the homeowners.

Overhead, a corrugated metal roof in a muted metallic finish nods to the region's agrarian past and the site's history as farmland. The landscape design deepens the home's connection to the site with a series of radiating gardens, moving from cultivated to wild and all maintained by the owners themselves. The layered entry procession begins with a "welcome garden," rising from the drive to guide visitors toward the courtyard. It's planted with low ferns and lavender, while to the south a butterfly garden blooms with bee balm, New England aster, and star of Persia. To the east, a shadier garden features sword ferns, rhododendrons, and huckleberry.



The west patio is bordered by a concrete retaining wall that doubles as a bench.

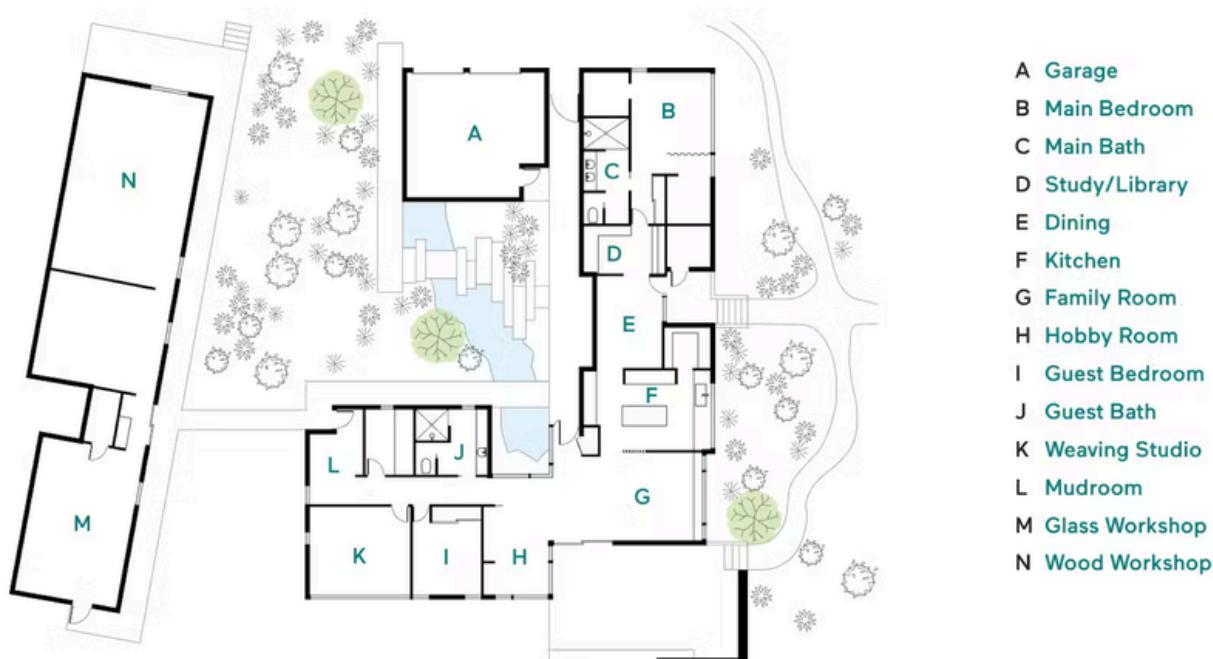
Inside and out, the home reflects the couple's lives as makers. Her passion for gardening shaped the rhythmic, layered landscaping, while his fascination with reflecting pools inspired the water features. Slatted wood screens in the living room and around the exterior loading dock, along with glass artworks displayed on the dining room shelves, were fabricated on-site by the couple. "They wanted the home to be an expression of who they are," Wittman says. "Now, they can live and create side by side, gracefully and seamlessly."



"They wanted a home where they could follow the weather, experiencing and doing activities on the property throughout the seasons—during the wet cold seasons, on the inside, and during the warm, dry seasons, out of doors," he says.



Trails lead around a pond on the south side of the home.



Floor plan of French Creek Workshops by Wittman Estes

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Project Credits:

Architect of Record: [Wittman Estes / @wittman_estes](#)

Builder/General Contractor: [Movic Reinhardt / @movicreinhardt](#)

Structural Engineer: [J Welch Engineering, Joshua Welch](#)

Civil Engineer: [LPD Engineering, Jennifer Argraves](#)

Landscape and Interior Design: [Wittman Estes](#)

Cabinetry Design/Installation: [Contour Woodworks](#)

Other: [Quantum Windows & Doors / @quantumwindows](#)

Other: [Geo Group Northwest, Adam Gaston](#)

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