

New York bluestone pavers and a low limestone wall lead to the main entrance. Directly upstairs, a cozy reading niche includes a circular opening.

The strong L-shaped footprint (below) helps define the expansive area between the home and the lake, and creates a dramatic backdrop for outdoor entertaining and family football games.

Looking from the kitchen (right), the cool colors of the lake provide a balanced contrast to the warm hues of the formal living room's woodwork, masonry and furnishings.



a Green Break

Fresh out of Iowa State University's College of Design, Matt Coen was offered a unique opportunity. Retiring New York executives, Connie and Dennis Purdum, were moving back to their hometown of Creston, Iowa, and asked Coen to create a private retreat on the shores of Summit Lake: a relaxed home for a quiet couple that could sometimes be used for family gatherings of up to 70 people. Imagine a cozy cottage combined with a banquet hall and hotel.

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Not yet licensed, Coen was understandably nervous about going solo on such a grand project, even with the full support of the Purdums, who happen to be his aunt and uncle. He brought the project to Jeffrey Morgan Architecture (JMA|Studio), an established Des Moines firm, and then worked as JMA's lead designer and project manager. W.R. Main served as general contractor.

The 16-acre property sits in the foliage-rich section of Summit Lake's southeastern edge, and the Purdums had a strong desire for no trees to be removed. Coen shoehorned the home's footprint into an area that saved the vegetation and provided ample views of the water, creating a celebratory feature in a century-old oak tree near the formal entry. "The house was designed to change from a two-person home into a giant family space at the flip of a switch," explains Coen. The result is an L-shaped house, with each wing intersecting at a central mechanical and service core. "There's not a single room in the house, other than the core, where you don't experience the lake."

Separate systems are devoted to each wing so that during most of the year, the Purdums enjoy their kitchen, master suite and home office, where they continue to dabble in the purebred Angus cattle

business. On weekends and in summers, the other wing is "turned on," giving power and access to four more bedrooms, a spacious living room and a lower-level walk-out recreation room.

The architecture was inspired by the farms and vernacular seen along U.S. Route 169, which Coen absorbed during his many drives between Des Moines and Creston. The floor plan is connected by a loggia of sorts—a long, wide hallway that feeds the entries, vertical circulation and open kitchen.

In an era of trendy downsizing, it's hard to justify the environmental-friendliness of a 10,000-square-foot home, but it was a goal of the project, and the building succeeds in myriad ways. Natural lighting and geothermal heating is used. Materials include sustainably harvested cedar shingles, reclaimed flooring and regional limestone. The timbers used for columns and beams are old Douglas-fir railroad trestles, recovered from the bottom of the Great Salt Lake.

Coen had an architect's enviable context of being intimately familiar with how his clients and their family operate. "And I'm lucky that I get to visit the house a few times each year, and experience it as a user—a real person," he adds. **la**