By day, an inviting, sleek glass entryway eases the transition of a modern house built in the traditional Tuxedo Park neighborhood of Atlanta. At night, the glass lights up with a welcoming two-story sculptural light that can be seen from the street – a key element the owners wanted when building their dream family home.

The two-story great room fireplace juts out from the structural wall, requiring internal steel brackets to keep it from sagging. The shelving for the kindling is actually thin, steel-plate boxes that stack atop each other and are attached to the walls internally. The other side of the C-shape house is visible through the two-story windows. At night, the glass lights up with a welcoming two-story sculptural light that can be seen from the street – a key element the owners wanted when building their dream family home.
“I began with an idea that this would be a glass lantern in an overall solid,” describes architect Robert Tretsch, “and I just started carving away from it, which gave me the entrance.”

Straddling the two-story glass entranceway is a recessed wall that connects the glass features and acts as the anchor for the home. “I like the idea of having this strong, deep color in the recess of the front entry terrace,” admits Tretsch, who is based in Harrison Design’s Atlanta office. “With it bracketed by the glass and white stucco, it brings you a little deeper into the home.”

By using different woods in the kitchen, the 12-foot ceilings are brought to a more homelike feel. While the entertainment kitchen is central to the common areas, a full working kitchen was created adjacent, accessible by the family room.

“THE HOUSE UNFOLDS AND SURPRISES AS YOU COME THROUGH IT,” NOTES TRETSCHE. “EVERYTHING SORT OF PEELS BACK.”
The downstairs family room includes a bar made of walnut. The bar features tiles from the Michael Habachy graphic tile collection from TileBar. The fun retro globe fixtures are TR Bulb suspension lights from Danish design company MENU.

is needed.” So when a study became a bedroom, it didn’t affect the home’s design, but rather reflected the family’s lifestyle. “People should live the way they want to,” adds Tretsch.

A soaring two-story fireplace is a central focus of the house, both socially and structurally. The lower level with its limited windows had problematic requirements, but Tretsch created a media room and bar area, even leaving room for a golf simulator. “It’s a grown-up playground,” he admits, laughing.

The stairs down are split level, allowing light in from the main floor.

Once the initial home design was completed—a process that included eliminating the architect’s desire for elevations and the owners’ initial thought of a pitched roof—designer Michael Habachy was brought on board.

By establishing a neutral color palette with darker accents, Habachy created a cohesion that brings together the diverse living areas. “We were big on keeping the spaces on the upper levels light and airy with the occasional dark accents,” he explains. “And on the lower terrace level (where the bar and theater are), we did the opposite by selecting dark, rich finishes for the walls and lighter furnishings as accents.”

While the open floor plan allows for ample natural light, the 12-foot ceilings on the main floor had the potential to make the living area feel more commercial than homelike. Design elements, including millwork, soften the rooms. In the kitchen, natural and ebonized rift oak are used, with the lighter wood finished about nine feet off the floor and the darker higher up.

The home also reflects the family’s emphasis on entertaining. A second, fully functional kitchen is adjacent to the main-floor kitchen and can be easily concealed behind four massive folding doors.

Finding solutions to fit people’s lifestyles is always the challenge for an architect. “You always gauge your clients,” states Tretsch. “They have a comfort zone, and a good architect can push them out of it in certain areas, while keeping other elements that they like.”

“They seemed to grow with the plan,” he recalls of the homeowners. There was a groundswell of appreciation.