



# Real Estate

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## Small and Customized

### ARTICLE CONTRIBUTED BY JODY BROWN

I met with Jason Hart, principal of Cube Design + Research, last week to talk about the home he designed in Carrboro for Anantha Aiyyer and his wife. Of course we met in a coffee shop, because we're architects, and that's our natural habitat. Over sips of tea and coffee, Jason told me about the design.

"Most of the good ideas come from listening to my client", Jason told me. Then he described how he picked up design cues for the home by getting to know what was important to his client. Anantha Aiyyer is scientist. He's a physicist and a professor at NC State who studies weather patterns and meteorology. He is an avid outdoorsman, with a love of hiking, star-gazing, and nature. Anantha wanted a house that would be connected to nature. He wanted a modest modern home that would grow with him as his family grew, and work as they aged in place. He also wanted a home that was as sustainable and energy efficient as he could afford.

With these clues in mind, Jason and his team designed a wonderful, efficient modern home on a beautiful wooded site in Carrboro. The three bedroom home is small (only 1750 s.f.) but, it feels much larger. The architects were careful with the scale of each room in the home. The ceilings are low in the hallways and entry hall, and then open up to larger ceilings in the living areas. Most importantly, each room has a connection to the outdoors. Windows are carefully placed on axis with your line of sight. As you walk down the hallway, or enter into a room you immediately look towards the outdoors. Skylights are carefully placed throughout to give natural light, and add height to the spaces. Jason told me that natural lighting was important in the design, because of the way the light changes during the day, or as clouds pass in front of the sun. The light will dim and brighten in an organic way that just can't be achieved with artificial lighting.

The home is incredibly energy efficient. The walls and ceiling are highly insulated. It uses a tank-less water heater and has radiant heating throughout the concrete floors. Plus, the mechanical units are connected to a geothermal system, which uses the natural constant temperature of the earth to regulate the heating and cooling of the home. Also, there are plans for solar panels to be added to the roof in the future.

It's a rare thing when a design reflects the personality of the owner, but this home achieves just that. I particularly love the way Anantha can view the stars in the night sky through the skylights in his bedroom. I imagine that lying there every night, looking up, he really does feel at home with nature.



Knock Knock visits some of North Carolina's most unique residential architecture, powered by the archives of preservation nonprofit North Carolina Modernist Houses, [ncmodernist.org](http://ncmodernist.org).

PHOTOS BY MIKE CINCALA