



Modern Love

A clever couple constructs the city home of their dreams in Smith Hill

Brian DeChambeau and Natasha Astrid Rosario DeChambeau enjoy an urban lifestyle: donning a scarf and walking everywhere, using public transportation, shopping small at mom-and-pop shops and bodegas. Brian was living in Boston when he decided to move to a more manageable city – Providence – where the couple met. Neither owns a car by choice, which necessitated finding a place near Providence Station for quick access to the train.

Photography by Christian Scully of Design Imaging Studios, courtesy of David Sisson Architecture



When seeking a home, the couple preferred to own, not rent, and Brian found himself drawn to an unusually shaped lot in the Smith Hill area. At just 1,800 square feet, zoning laws dictated that only a small portion could actually be built up, so after initial consultation with Boston architect Jeff Geisinger, Brian enlisted David Sisson Architecture in East Providence. David Sisson worked closely with Brian and Natasha to realize their vision, orienting the house away from the street and implementing a reverse living plan where main rooms are not ground-level and windows offer privacy and views of treetops rather than the street.

“This is a perfect example of architects and homeowners joining forces to reinvent the big city lifestyle for the smaller city by focusing on unbuildable urban lots, working with energy-efficient technologies, and designing for access to public transportation and bike paths,” says Sisson. “In Providence, Natasha and Brian have what their friends from New York and Boston can only dream about.”

“People don’t see Smith Hill as a desirable neighborhood, but we see it as a regular neighborhood with ups and downs,” says Natasha. Due to the small footprint, she was initially concerned that the house would





Wall elements - including the bike - help emphasize the angled wall of the staircase behind



GET RHODY STYLE

Brian and Natasha DeChambeau enjoy living a city life in the Smith Hill neighborhood. Next time you're on Route 44, take a detour and explore with these suggestions from the couple.

WALK SMITH

In addition to Providence Community Library, find a rec center, bodegas, places to eat, and more; there's even a nearby meadow perfect for birdwatching (Brian has spotted finches and a hawk).

DIG IN

In the empty lot across from his house, Brian has planted trees. He's also made roots in the community, helping the nearby Lithuanian American Social Club by working with them to build basketball hoops and help preserve club history.

LOCAL FIRST

The couple cites Farm Fresh RI and The Industrious Spirit Co. as local faves, along with David Sisson Architecture, Buz Gardiner, Gardiner Construction.

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feel dark and constricted, but because of the high ceilings and tall windows, spaces are flooded with natural light, an element especially helpful with so much of daily life still being based at home. Adding to the privacy along a busy street is the fact that most passersby don't even realize the tall contemporary is a single family home, mistaking it for an office building. "I was outside with a friend when we overheard

someone walking by who asked 'what is that supposed to be?'" says Brian. "People may not recognize it as a house because the windows don't have muntins", which are the bars or sashes typically separating each pane of glass.

To maintain the couple's shared minimalist aesthetic while playing to the home's geometric lines, Brian constructed open shelving in the kitchen; he also made use of vertical space by hanging the television

high up on the wall in the living room. A large square starburst quilt made by Brian's mom is displayed in the stair hall, not only adding texture but also drawing the eye up to emphasize the height.

According to Natasha, the house has brought home for her how much your environment can affect how you feel and your level of productivity. "I really like how serene it is," she says.