

SHADES OF GREEN

PERSONAL STORIES ON CUTTING-EDGE, HEALTHIER, COUNTRY HOMES.



ABOVE | Spring River Residence, 3200 Square Feet

BELOW | Hillsdale Residence, 2100 Square Feet



For Ron, a part-time rural resident, connecting to the land personally and spiritually was a journey that began when he found a tiny, affordable slice of woodland property to which he could retreat after a hard day at work. He was looking for a twist on an Arts and Crafts style home, drawn to the inspiration that American natural history had on these designs.

RON INTUITIVELY TRANSLATED HIS ARTS AND CRAFTS AESTHETIC INTO A GREEN HOUSE, BUT UNLIKE THE PRISSEY, WOODLAND COTTAGES OF THE 19TH CENTURY, HE WANTED A FINGER-SNAP BOLD VERSION THAT HAD A BIG MODERN, SOHO-LIKE FEEL.

His desire for generous volume with a small footprint allowed the science of passive solar design to work its magic. The resulting interior operates very much the same way as a deciduous forest. In the winter, the low-lying sun penetrates deep into all spaces, warming them up for free; in the summer, the sun beams down from high in the sky and the home's generous overhangs block it out almost completely, keeping the interior cool—also free of charge! Ron's home harnesses the sun.

At just 2,100 square feet, Ron's house uses its square footage diligently, committing the bulk of it to one big room used for nearly all household activities from dinner parties to laundry-folding. Bedrooms are modest in size and cost-effectively tucked into a split-level arrangement with half a level above ground and half below. A tall screened-in porch squeezes up tight against the towering pines on the land. This is perhaps the most luxurious space in the house, reflecting a playful character and providing the ideal outdoor living environment—wide open views, fresh air, and no bugs. The house is passively heated and cooled with strategically placed windows and a layout that promotes good airflow. The structure is fully separated from harsh weather by an uninterrupted insulated wrapping and the electricity is hardwired to run from solar panels set onto a south-facing sloped roof.



PROJECT | Hillsdale Residence, 3 Bed 2 Bath Woodland Cottage

2100
SQUARE FEET

The large parcel of Michigan farmland on which Lucy and Michael ultimately built had been in Lucy's family for generations. This was to be a house for both life and work; both of them like to work from home. Part farmhouse, part villa, their dream was to create a modern version of a Neo-classical Plantation style home because it symbolized the magnificence of our American agriculture heritage. The couple came to us with two visions, two appreciations for the American rural landscape and two very different designs to conserve it.

A NEO-CLASSICAL ESTATE DOES NOT COME TO MIND WHEN THINKING ABOUT GREEN ARCHITECTURE, YET LUCY AND MICHAEL WERE ABLE TO HOLD ONTO TRADITION AND GRANDEUR WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PURSUE RENEWAL AND CONSERVATION.

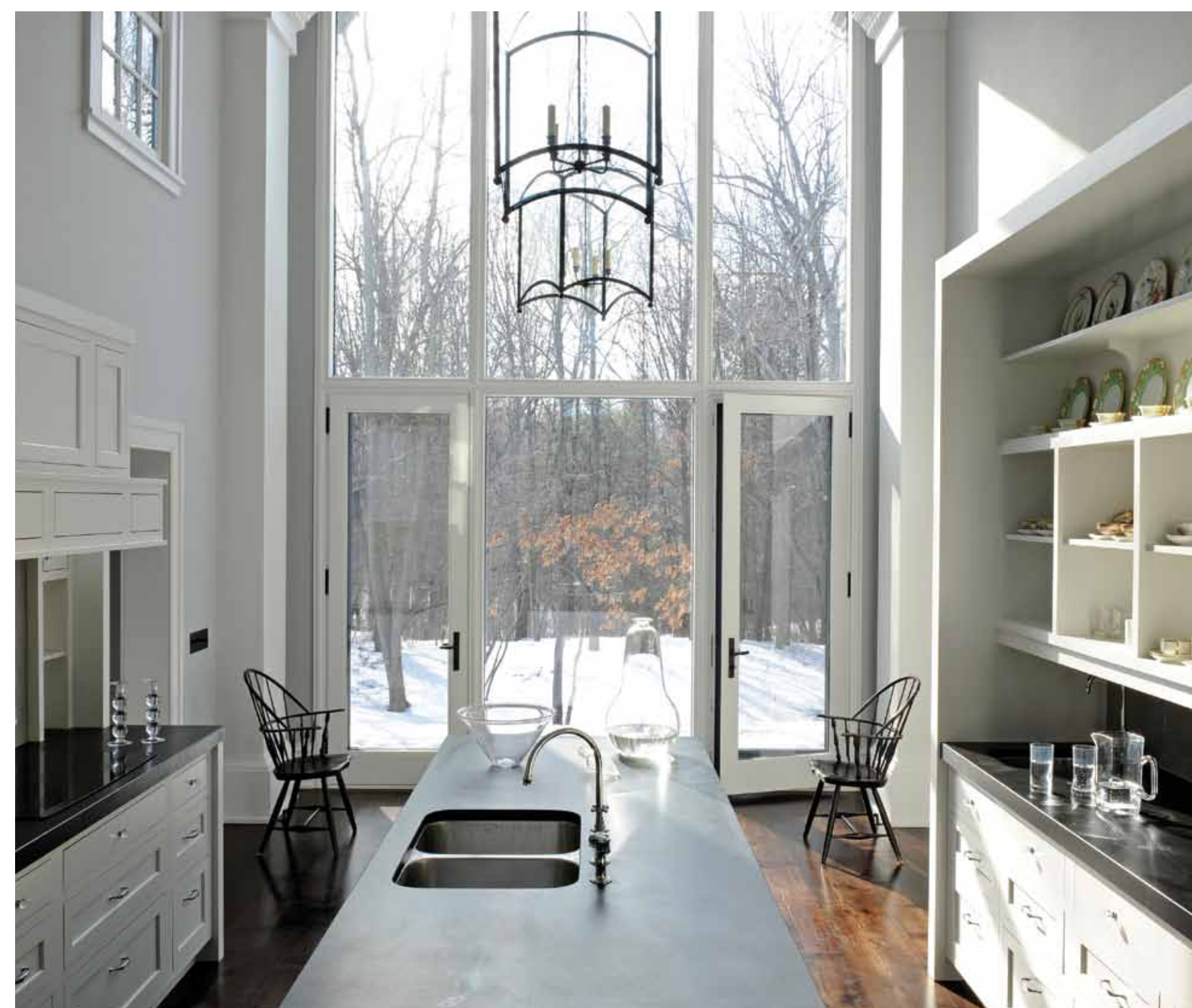
From the front, Lucy and Michael's house is the epitome of Greek Revival with an orderly set of double-hung windows. The modern distortion is only revealed when you step inside: The entire west-facing façade of the home is made of glass. This wall of windows is placed next to a stand of deciduous trees at precisely the right distance to harness the power of the sun. In the winter, with the leaves off the trees, sunlight comes pouring in. In fact, there is so much sun that even on the coldest days, the family keeps a window cracked for fresh air. Leaves come out in the summer and even though the angle of the sun is high, there is plenty of shade to keep the interior cool. Once again, superior construction and super insulation allow minimal energy to be used to maintain the home's comfortable temperature. Tapping into additional free energy that lies underground, Lucy and Michael opted to invest in geothermal power to help generate the heat that warms the house. The system runs liquid through tubes that are warmed by the constant temperature of the ground. The heat is then distributed by air blown over the tubes.



3200
SQUARE FEET

It works in reverse of the climate, cooling in the summer, (think of the refreshing feel of a cool basement) and warming in the winter.

But the real green power of this foxy modern interior is in its dignified classical exterior and the simple quality of ample space. Strategically placed windows move the air around as if it were out in the meadows that surround the house: Who needs air conditioning? The horizon of the ceiling is twice as high as traditional homes—so high, in fact, that it is always out of view, as if the pale grey-blue surface above is nothing but sky. Square footage was spent lavishly only on the two most important rooms of the house, the family room and the kitchen. The home office, master and kids' room are off in a modest wing to the side and another long, narrow wing serves as the mudroom and pantry. There is no wasted space. There is no fancy parlor or dining room. Who needs them when your everyday space is this dramatic?



PROJECT | Spring River Residence, 4 Bed 3 Bath Country Estate