The unapologetically modern home going up in Western Springs, a charming community 15 miles west of Chicago dotted with mature trees, traditional homes and a town butcher, piqued neighbors’ curiosity. It was similar in size and scale to other two-story houses in the area, but its facade comprised an expansive use of glass. In fact, before a privacy screen was installed in front of the house, neighbors had a floor-to-ceiling view of Zach and Monika Piper making breakfast in their kitchen.

“Our home is very different from the traditional homes in the neighborhood, but it’s the style we prefer,” explains Zach, a partner at a small private investment group in Chicago. Yet clad in warm cedar wood, porcelain tile and stucco, “the choice of materials makes it not stand out so much.”

At 87 feet wide and 150 feet deep, there was ample opportunity to achieve an open and airy space—the living room’s engineered wood flooring coordinates with the porcelain tile on the fireplace surround, which is continued outside for a seamless transition between indoors and out.

When we moved to the suburbs, we were pleasantly surprised by the lack of modern homes in the area,” says homeowner Monika Piper. “There has been a lot of support for this project in the neighborhood,” adds architect Kevin Toukoumidis.

The unapologetically modern home going up in Western Springs, a charming community 15 miles west of Chicago dotted with mature trees, traditional homes and a town butcher, piqued neighbors’ curiosity. It was similar in size and scale to other two-story houses in the area, but its facade comprised an expansive use of glass. In fact, before a privacy screen was installed in front of the house, neighbors had a floor-to-ceiling view of Zach and Monika Piper making breakfast in their kitchen.

“Our home is very different from the traditional homes in the neighborhood, but it’s the style we prefer,” explains Zach, a partner at a small private investment group in Chicago. Yet clad in warm cedar wood, porcelain tile and stucco, “the choice of materials makes it not stand out so much.”

At 87 feet wide and 150 feet deep, there was ample opportunity to achieve an open and airy space—the living room’s engineered wood flooring coordinates with the porcelain tile on the fireplace surround, which is continued outside for a seamless transition between indoors and out.

When we moved to the suburbs, we were pleasantly surprised by the lack of modern homes in the area,” says homeowner Monika Piper. “There has been a lot of support for this project in the neighborhood,” adds architect Kevin Toukoumidis.

Seeking to blend city style with the comfort of the suburbs, a young family turns to dSPACE Studio to build a courtyard home with an indoor-outdoor flow that gives them the best of both worlds.

By Zlata Kozul Naumovski
Photography by Tony Soluri
introduce plenty of light and create a strong indoor-outdoor connection, paramount features that the recent city transplants desired. To that end, dSPACE Studio of Chicago designed a front courtyard nestled between the garage door and entry stairway.

“We wanted to keep the house as open and airy as possible while offering privacy and a sense of security,” says Tom Hagerty, dSPACE project manager. The courtyard is partially enclosed by glass, yet it is hidden from street views by a louvered-wood screen that shields the family from curious eyes. In fact, the entire front elevation of the house is closed off from the street except for a small section of the second floor, which is revealed through floor-to-ceiling glass windows that bring light deep into the house.

An attached gate on the louvered screen wall fronting the courtyard allows access from outside, as do sliding glass doors from the kitchen. “The effect is a seamless transition from interior to exterior spaces,” says Kevin Toukoumidis, dSPACE founder and principal. “The home’s open plan creates the feeling of a much larger space,” he adds.

A small fountain, wispy grasses and lush plantings conjure a tranquil reprieve, creating one of Monika’s favorite spots in the house. “I really enjoy the courtyard waterfall,” she admits. “It’s very calming and unique.” Another favorite area is her living room, where she easily hosted 20 members of her book club while her husband entertained his friends at the custom bar with illuminated shelving in the basement.

An edited palette of materials throughout the house keeps things calm and luxurious. White oak engineered-wood flooring closely relates to the living room fireplace’s porcelain tile surround wall—the structural wall extends from the living room to the outdoors and is treated with the same porcelain tile,
creating one long extension from the inside to the outside. A cantilevered concrete hearth follows suit and leads to another rectangular fireplace outside. Sliding glass doors open 8 feet wide, leading to an outdoor terrace with a retractable canvas pergola and hot tub, a last-minute addition by the homeowners. “The home opens to the outside, so you feel connected to the landscape,” says Toukoumidis.

With two small children under the age of 4, the Pipers’ kitchen, meanwhile, is in constant use. White-quartz solid surface countertops are low-maintenance and contrast nicely with dark stained oak cabinets. A pantry behind the kitchen stores all their supplies and keeps things out of sight from the main area. A mudroom farther back offers more storage.

Leading upstairs, a sculptural staircase of floating hardwood with vertical steel cables and wood slats functions as part stair railing and part visual art, while light is introduced in the master bathroom via a skylight directly above the tub and in the master closet through a slice of windows above the clothing racks. An enclosed glass balcony extends across the upper level from the master bedroom to the children’s rooms, which are festooned with playful monkeys and sheathed in hot pink, and onto a lofted reading area where the young family can gather before retiring to their respective rooms. “The home is unique for this area,” notes Toukoumidis. “There are windows and light in all directions, and the house is always surrounded by plants and the outdoors.”

“We love our home and, even though it is modern, I think it fits in well with the community,” Monika says. Her husband agrees: “We’re staying in Western Springs a long time.”

SO SERENE
Clockwise from top: A skylight above the tub floods the master suite with natural light, while Q-Stone minimal tile by Provenza was used in differing configurations on the floor and wall; a glass-railing balcony overlooks the master bedroom balcony along the second floor, connecting it with the children’s bedrooms and reading loft; Bianco Carrara hex mosaic stone tile was used in the powder room, while a floating sink continues the home’s open and airy feeling.