

SELLER LETTER AND FEATURES LIST.

11911 Laurie Lane, Bunker Hill – Houston, TX 77024

(Per Seller) I'm a sucker for good architecture. As a child, the house I grew up in was designed and built by an architect for his own family. Growing up, I didn't know exactly what it meant, but was able to see that somehow, even though many of my friends' houses were bigger, somehow, ours was nicer. Our house had details none of the others had – ceilings faced with tongue & groove boards instead of sheetrock, wood paneling that didn't come in sheets, windows that overlooked scenic vistas and fences that enhanced the property. Lights on dimmer switches, clever storage nooks, gracious proportions. A house that didn't look just like it's neighbors but was somehow perfect for its surroundings. As I grew older, I knew that was the kind of house I wanted for myself someday.

By the time I was old enough to buy my own first home it was easy to see where the standard tract homes fell short. They all looked alike somehow and followed whatever was in fashion at the time. (How was it my parents' home had never looked dated?) And as my housing budget grew and my tastes became more demanding, it was easy to see those same flaws in even the more expensive homes. They got bigger, but somehow not really a whole lot better. They felt spacious and grand, but still somehow, off in some intangible way.

I always thought I might marry an architect, but as it happened, the man I fell in love with was a builder instead. Not the 'sit in the office and bark orders at construction crews' kind of builder, but the work with his own crew and build it himself kind of builder. As his business grew, he had the same struggles as every other general contractor, finding qualified sub-contractors who did high-quality work. Even the expensive crews with the best reputations could not build things as well as he could, so eventually he stopped using them and built most things himself, sometimes with a few select others he knew well and worked closely with.

When the time came for us to move back to Houston in 2000, we were looking for a 'fixer upper' house in a wonderful neighborhood, and that's exactly what we found in this house. While it was definitely a fixer upper, there was still something about it that said "good bones". The wall of glass in the living room, the sitting of the house on the lot, leaving a large yard, the simple well-proportioned massing of the core shapes, the arrangement of public spaces and private spaces. There was something about this house that was different from the others we looked at, and it turned out it too was architect-designed.

So, we set out to bring the house back to its rightful glory, relying on my passion for architecture and my husband's passion for high-quality building. We knew there would be a lot to do, and in the end, we rebuilt almost everything. People talk about a "to the studs" renovation, but we did much more than that, rebuilding walls, adding and changing windows, replacing virtually all of

plumbing and wiring (including hard-wired cat 6e internet wiring), adding insulation just about everywhere, and building in the kinds of thoughtful details that make a home a joy to live in.

Along the way, I poured through architecture books, finding inspiration in the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Greene and Greene (of course), but also enlightenment and great advice in the 'Not so Big House' books by Sarah Susanka. She was able to articulate precisely the dissatisfaction I was feeling in even the nicest homes we looked at, and her philosophy of cozy spaces really rang true for me. Instead of making things bigger and grander, we worked to make them cozier and more welcoming, ending up with a home we loved living in.

A room-by-room list of some of our updates, upgrades and details follows.

### Front Drive

- The patterned concrete driveway was completely rebuilt in late 2019, with 6"+ thick slabs of 4,000 psi concrete. (More than twice as strong as the standard 4" of 3,500 psi.)
- We added tire stops for each of the four guest parking spaces.
- The mailbox was a custom design including two 7' tall stone pillars and a rusted-steel heavy duty mailbox that pivots for ease of access. (2020)

- The front fences are custom designed, featuring cumaru wood (aka Brazilian teak) on galvanized steel frames. (2020 center and east side, 2018 on west). Hope you like them, because they will last about 50 years!
- The antique bronze dragon handles on the east and center gates are from a Javanese estate.
- The small stone wall on the east side screens trash and recycling cans from view.
- Volt brass exterior lighting on a light-sensitive timer system. (2019). There is capacity for more lights if you like.
- We also installed cup hooks for hanging Christmas lights around the eaves on the east and front of the house, and used magnetic hooks to hang lights on the garage walkway canopy.
- Automatic sprinklers and drip fittings with custom copper risers for potted plants.

### Front Entry Exterior

- The whole front entry and canopy to garage was designed by Seattle architect Darin Russell. The rusted steel I-beams (sealed and stabilized), cedar posts and steel beam footings were custom designed and built for this house. (2019)
- The front custom-designed door is a 54" wide steel-faced pivot with custom-made knurled steel handles. The garage pedestrian door was built to match. (2020)

- The low stone wall running from the front porch to the garage unifies the front elevation and screens packages from drive-by view. (Not that we get much of that here, but you hear about porch pirates in other neighborhoods.)

### Entry Interior

- The glass installation just inside the entry features a Stas cable system used by art galleries and museums that can be easily reconfigured for your artwork. Cables can be easily added, removed, or repositioned anywhere in the low-profile ceiling tracks. (2020)
- Art lights are on dimmers and can be adjusted to focus on individual pieces.

### Bar

- The built-in wet bar features soapstone countertops and a travertine mini-brick backsplash with the travertine hand-cut by the sellers to frame porcelain leaves
- The ice bucket (which conveys) was hand-made to match the red travertine sink.

### Kitchen

I spent two years planning the layout of this kitchen! Really. I like to cook and entertain casually and wanted friends and family to be close by but not in the work zone. So, I planned the layout to naturally direct foot traffic either well behind the primary work zone (I call it the cockpit) or to the front side of the island. And if I say so myself, I nailed it!

As you look at the space, imagine yourself preparing a meal and you will see for yourself how great the workflow is. I have seen so many gorgeous kitchens that were clearly designed by non-cooks, with islands in the way, prep sinks miles from the refrigerator or cooktop, and warming drawers at floor level where **no one would ever actually use them.**

- The two-sided island seating counter (seats up to six) works so much better than a straight line for conversations, and the upper-level counter allows the cook to control when appetizers are served, as well as shielding the work area from the living room and dining room. It is also a great configuration for helping kids with homework and keeping their papers out of the cooking zone.
- The copper range hood was custom-built from a 150-year-old antique chimney cap we found in our favorite antique store, so the miscellaneous minor dings and dents are patina, 'a feature, not a bug'.
- The range hood appliance inside the copper is a Sirius 650 CFM powerhouse that is both quiet and powerful. We carefully planned and researched the best venting paths and ductwork options to maximize the airflow and minimize noise. It works like a champ and is powerful enough for a true professional cooktop.
- So why didn't I install one of those massive stainless professional cooktops? Well, the black glass was actually more functional and easier to keep clean. It has one 22,000 BTU super high-powered burner, two very precise simmer burners, and two regular burners. If you carefully compare specs, its performance is really hard to beat. Or even match. But if you want a pro-look cooktop, the vent, electrical and gas connections are already up to the task.

- The counter-depth Fisher and Paykel refrigerator is recent (2019). I considered upgrading to a built-in when I had the chance, but elected not to. With two other fridge/freezers in the pantry, I certainly didn't need the space. And sadly, the built-ins actually don't have the greatest repair record. But if you remove the upper cabinets above the fridge, the space is there.
- One of my favorite features is the built-in warming drawer located next to the cooktop. I love serving my meals hot, and pre-warming the plates makes it easy. It's great to have for those large family gatherings when everyone brings a dish and both ovens are full of turkeys and hams. The location next to the cooktop creates a great 'plating zone' when my countertops are full.
- Speaking of full countertops, that actually doesn't happen much because I built 6" of extra depth into the island. That lets me push things to the back and still have ample work space on the front.
- The appliance pantry next to the double ovens also helps keep countertops uncluttered.
- Full-extension drawers, as opposed to ordinary doors, makes every inch of cabinet space really work. There's just not a bad storage location. I made the deliberate choice not to use every inch (inside corners) so every inch would be better.
- Soapstone countertops are chemical, stain and heat resistant. A black magic marker makes scratches disappear and oiling the countertops once a year keeps them looking their best.

- The backsplash tile is Walker Zanger's Gramercy Park line with hand-painted Somerset floral liner and chunky molding. We installed this splash from the top-down to assure a perfect fit without cutting any of the beautiful trim tiles.
- If you are wondering where the electrical outlets are, there's a bunch of them hidden between the tile molding and the underside of the cabinets.
- That's also where the under-cabinet light, disposal, and china cabinet light switches are.
- For large families and parties, two dishwashers make cleanup a breeze.
- Trash and recycling pullouts next to each sink keep these necessary but unattractive functions handy but hidden.

### Living Room

This is one room where we really live. Every morning we have our coffee there and look out over the yard to see how our garden is doing. If the weather's great, sometimes we'll sit outside instead and listen to the birds and the water tricking in the two fountains. Periodically we'll check to make sure the night herons nesting in our front yard haven't picked off the koi. (So far, so good.)

- Floor tile is a PEI 4 (commercial-rated) Italian porcelain in a 'frame and island' pattern that we repeated in the kitchen, dining room and study. Originally, we assumed we'd do limestone or travertine flooring, but once the Walker Zanger saleswoman told us how much upkeep would be required and showed us a section of badly-worn limestone in their showroom, we happily went with the porcelain instead. It's a breeze to care for.



- The gas fireplace is wonderful on chilly mornings and evenings – instant fire, and instant ‘off’ again once the day warms up. We especially love the seating ledge in front, and fire or not, the ledge is one of the most popular seats in the house.
- Not surprisingly, the wall of windows is one of the features that first drew us to this house. We replaced the original windows of course, with double-paned argon-filled Pella windows, and our A/C bills reflect that.

### Downstairs Bath

I fell in love with the pyracantha-berry accent tiles, and the rest of the room just flowed from that inspiration – the Kohler Roussillon red sink with the ‘berry-dots’ on the underside, the crema marfil marble, the yellow-brick floor tiles. That room always reminds me of a summer afternoon in a field of wildflowers.

### Utility Room

We packed a lot of utility into this room. (sorry). The corner wall cabinet has a rod to store clothes hangers, and the hanging rod across the doorway makes it easy to remove items from the dryer and hang them up before they get the chance to wrinkle. If they do wrinkle, there is an ironing board in the purpose-built cabinet.

## Secondary Bedrooms

One of my pet peeves about most houses is that the secondary bedrooms so often feel distinctly second class. Both of the upstairs secondary bedrooms here are much larger than typical and feature private 'en suite' baths and walk-in closets.

- The middle bedroom's arched-tile shower with the English exposed-valve shower fixtures is one of my favorites. Once I saw that sumptuous sage tile arch in the showroom, I knew we had to use it, and designed the whole bath around it. (Yes, I'm a tile junkie.) If you look closely at the tilework, you'll see none of the arch or related trim pieces were cut. Instead, we sized the shower to fit the tiles exactly.
- The bath in the far bedroom was also inspired by the tile – Walker Zanger's Mizu for the blue crackle accents and a luscious Emser creamy subway for the body. I'd like to say we also sized this bath perfectly to fit these tiles, but really, we just got lucky.
- All of the upstairs baths use two incredible tile membranes -- Ditra and Kerdi. ([https://www.schluter.com/schluter-us/en\\_US/](https://www.schluter.com/schluter-us/en_US/)) Ditra is an uncoupling and water-proofing membrane that prevents tiles and grout lines from cracking as a building expands and contracts, thereby protecting the structure against water leaks. Kerdi on the walls serves as a moisture barrier, protecting against water penetration. Using these membranes adds time, effort and cost to the tile job, but it's so worth it! An unadvertised benefit (How do they miss this?) is that by preventing water penetration beyond the grout, showers dry off much more quickly and as a result, mildew problems are practically non-existent.

- The far bedroom also has a separate study or office with a wonderful 'treehouse' view and a private balcony overlooking the koi pond and Devi fountain. We custom-designed the cattails balcony railing then later found the perfect lanterns to match.

### Primary Bedroom Suite

Completed in 2018, the master suite is an oasis! Walking into this room feels to me like walking into a Monet water lilies painting. I know it's a bit darker than the bright white that's popular now, but talk about cozy and restful... The paint in the master bedroom and 'her' bath is 'Sandy Lagoon' by noted colorist Ellen Kennon. My husband says the secret to a happy marriage is separate bathrooms, so yes, there are two master baths.

- Again, the inspiration for both baths started from the tile, in this case high end Spanish producer Adex's Hampton tile, hers in blue and his in spruce green, with a black and white Walker Zanger basketweave on the floors. Something about these tiles reminded me of the 1920's and the fabulous luxury bathrooms built then, so we went wild with a 1920's vibe.
- Hers:
  - Her bath features a freestanding Victoria & Albert volcanic limestone tub with a brass Barber Wilsons tub filler and hand-shower.
  - We added a slight bump-out for access to the valve, just in case, and topped it with a sliver of soapstone just the right size for a scented candle. I'd have said a wine glass, but that's what the neighboring glass shelf is for.

- Her vanity was custom-designed in the Biedermeier style and features double-decker cosmetics storage and a custom-fitted electric drawer for hair appliances. The top is soapstone.
- There's also a 'bath pantry' closet for larger items needed less frequently.
- The shower and vanity faucets are by Brooklyn-based Watermark with Swarovski crystal handles. Though they're not my usual style, somehow in this space, they just felt fabulous. If they're not your style, Watermark has a whole gallery of alternate handle styles you can easily switch out for.
- The extending 7x magnification mirror and alabaster chandelier are both antiques.
- The shower lights and vent fan are on the same timer switch. Again, the vent fan is powerfully-sized and selected for its quietness.
- His
  - His bath features a doorless-entry shower with Kohler brushed gold fittings.
  - His vanity, medicine cabinet and the wood trim on the half-wall were custom-made in an Arts & Crafts style.
  - His vanity top and sink are Kohler's Iron Impressions in 'cane sugar'.

There are also separate his and hers closets located behind the bed wall, each with slightly different detailing and tons of built-in cabinets. We will miss these closets...

## Structural Systems

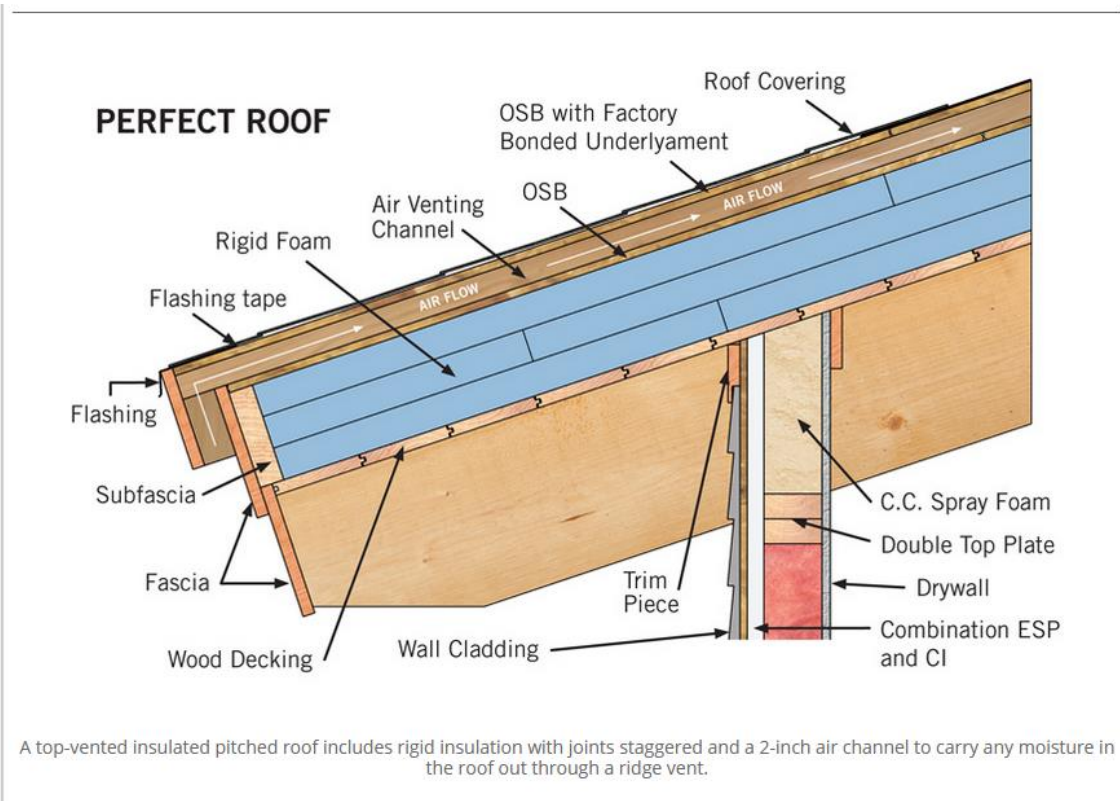
While I spent a lot of time and attention focusing on how the house looks, feels and 'lives', much of what makes this particular house truly special is behind the scenes. As a builder building his dream home for himself and his family, my husband made sure everything behind the walls was top-of-the line.

- **Insulation** – I'm a tile junkie, but for my husband, it's insulation. Every single wall, ceiling and floor is insulated, even the interior walls. The attic even has sprayed-in closed-cell foam, providing extra structural stability as well as incredible R-values – R-13 in most walls, R-19 in 2x6 walls (kitchen) and R25 in the attic. Even the garage is fully insulated with moisture-tight closets.
- **Framing & Interior Walls** - Almost all of the walls have been rebuilt with studs hand-selected for straightness and integrity. Studs were pre-drilled to assure electrical wires ran safely through the center of the studs, and were installed with double top and bottom plates for extra strength and to prevent twisting. Of course, hurricane clips were used well in excess of code requirements. Sheetrock was screwed into place rather than nailed to avoid 'nail pops.' Accordingly, the walls here are visibly straighter and truer than in other homes, even new construction. It's a subtle difference, but one you can see once you know how to look for it.
- **Exterior Walls** - The exterior stone cladding features full-thickness stone on brick ledges with weep holes. The cedar siding was hand-selected, kiln, then site-dried,

sanded, filled, primed with an oil-based alkyd primer, then caulked and painted in a multi-step process to prevent cracking, warping and leaking.

- **Garage** – The garage was entirely rebuilt (completed in 2020) at an elevation 10” above the original, which had flooded during hurricanes. The garage tool closets are insulated and weather-stripped, and the south closet is built-out with storage cabinets. The garage attic is fully insulated and decked for storage.
- **Site Grading** – The entire lot was regraded and elevated over the years to channel water flow away from the house during even the heaviest rains. Three sump pumps were added to channel water from the interior to the street drains. The City of Bunker Hill Village also made improvements to their drainage infrastructure. The house has never flooded.
- **Gutters and Downspouts** – A system of gutters, downspouts and rain chains funnel water away from the house and into underground drain lines. Gutters have leaf-guards to help them stay clean.
- **Roof** – The roof on this house (2006) is an engineering marvel described by the architect/designer as “the perfect roof”. The diagram below illustrates the general idea, though ours is somewhat different. From the bottom up, the roof assembly begins with the rafters filled with closed-cell spray-foam insulation. This is topped by a plywood deck sealed with a waterproofing membrane. Above this membrane is a series of air channels formed by anchoring 2”x2” slat boards above the rafters. The air

channel layer is then topped by another deck, weather and ice shield, and finally 30-year architectural composite shingles. A system of soffit and ridge vents funnels fresh air through the channels as cool air enters from the bottom, expands as it heats, then exits through the ridge vents, thereby pulling in fresh cooler air from below. The end result is a self-cooling roof that extends the lifespan of the shingles and helps cool the attic. Not to mention the extra strength and multiple layers between the elements and interior. Hard to believe, but our attic and everything in it is reasonably cool in even the hottest weather. The roof is worth a look – from the inside in the attic, or from the outside via the custom-made roof access ladder on the back of the house.



## Summary

If it wasn't perfectly obvious, we love this house. We've poured our hearts and souls into it, and in turn, this house has given us so much in return. It's sheltered us through hurricanes and 1,000-year storms without ever flooding. When hurricanes Ike and Rita crashed trees through our neighbors' roofs and into their living rooms, the just-as-big tree that fell onto our house dented a single shingle (since replaced) and caused no other damage to the house. (Our beefed-up roof eaves broke the 8" thick trunk instead.) The energy efficiencies we've built in keep electrical bills really low, even in Houston's hottest and most humid summers. And our safe and quiet little cul-de-sac is a wonderful community of lovely neighbors who help each other out any time it's needed.

Our friends all ask us how we can bear to leave a house that we love so much and have put so much into. Well, the very first day I met my husband, he told me about the house he planned to build one day – on a hill overlooking a lake in the Texas Hill Country. I had a similar dream, and through the years, we kept that dream alive in the backs of our minds for 'someday.' Twenty-eight years later, our kids are grown, my work is 100% online, and our renovation – make that rebuild – has been completed. One evening over a glass of wine we realized that 'someday' was here. So, we decided to look for that house on a hill overlooking a lake with a big workshop in the back and a few weeks ago, we found it. So really, it's just time for the next chapter in our lives.

Living here has confirmed for me that what truly matters in a house is definitely not how big it is, and not even what it looks, but what it feels like – how a house makes you feel. If this is the house for you, you'll feel it.



## USEFUL HOME FACTS

Not located in a flood zone

<https://www.harriscountyfemt.org/>

Zones into Bunker Hill Elementary, Memorial Middle School and Memorial High School.

Quick Access to Kinkaid, St Francis, St Cecilia, Duchesne and Awty.

Buyer to independently verify school zoning.

Just a few minutes to get to I10, Memorial City Mall and City Center

Not a through street. Private lane so traffic is access only for several homes. Very quiet.

## **Recent Replacements:**

Water heater: 2019

Kitchen refrigerator. Fischer and Paykel. 2019

**AC.** First floor is a 3 ton, commercial grade unit. 2019

Second floor is 13 years old

**Electrical.** All original electrical replaced

**Plumbing.** All plumbing above the slab replaced with copper. All plumbing under the home has been replaced with PVC drain lines except one small section at the front of the home leading to the first floor bathroom which was inaccessible.

**Alarm** – hardwired for ADT, not under contract. Owners used wireless SimpliSafe security system. Alarm connected to Memorial Villages police and fire department. Hardwired smoke detectors.

Zoned sprinkler system with two Rainbird control panels for front and back.

Every bedroom is hard wired with cat 6e Ethernet cable.

Direct TV (satellite)

## Utility Bills

	<u>Electricity</u>	<u>Gas</u>	<u>Water</u>	<u>Total</u>
January, 2021	\$ 117.03	\$ 79.61		\$ 196.64
February, 2021	119.24	45.66	172.90	337.80
March, 2021	103.82	126.57		230.39
April, 2021	135.24	45.36	216.90	397.50
May, 2020	171.18	28.90		200.08
June, 2020	289.47	26.37	536.00	851.84
July, 2020	333.23	24.59		357.82
August, 2020	329.96	26.32	405.80	762.08
September, 2020	358.29	24.59		382.88
October, 2020	297.92	29.18	431.00	758.10
November, 2020	213.34	43.49		256.83
December, 2020	198.57	68.18	299.95	566.70
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$ 222.27</b>	<b>\$ 47.40</b>	<b>\$ 171.88</b>	<b>\$ 441.56</b>

## Exclusions

Pantry fridge and freezer

Dining pendant light