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savoring

a welcoming home
emerges from
a puzzling lot

Old World
meets modern
in Santa Fe



challenge to charming

a masterfully solved property puzzle gives
rise to a stunning, welcoming home



by Lexi Marshall
photographs by Daniel Nadelbach

There's a certain kind of homeowner who doesn't just move into a house—she thinks about it, researches it, dreams about it for a full year before a single wall goes up. Marta Ragsdale is that homeowner. In the far northeast heights of Albuquerque, on a sloping lot with a view that holds you in place, she and her husband Michael have built the home they always envisioned: warm, livable, intentional and entirely their own.

The finished house spans approximately 4,500 square feet on nearly an acre in a small gated community. The Ragsdales moved in November 2025—but the story begins, as all great things do, with a view.

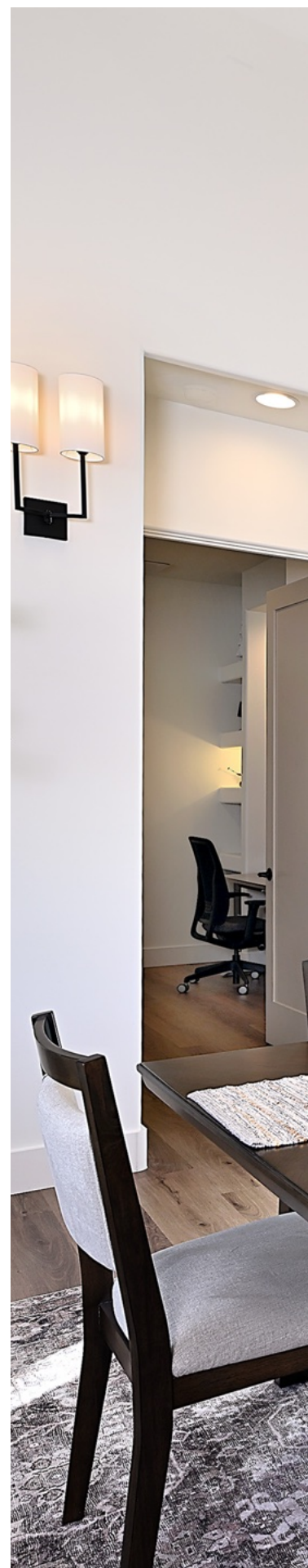
Marta and Michael weren't looking to build when they started scanning listings in North Albuquerque Acres. They'd already built once with custom builder Ted Lowe of Lowe-bo Homes, and a real friendship had grown from it. But then they found the lot—the last undeveloped parcel in the community, with a dramatic slope, a waterway along the north side, and a tight buildable pad requiring county permits to position the house where they envisioned it. "I call it a misfit lot," Marta says. "It has a great mountain view, but a huge slope. I'm sure that's why it sat for so long."

Standing on that lot, what others saw as obstacles Marta saw as a puzzle—especially once she turned to face the Sandia Mountains. She needed an expert opinion about what was possible. She called Lowe.

Lowe has been building in Albuquerque for nearly four decades. He grew up in the industry alongside his father, earned a civil engineering degree from the University of New Mexico and has spent his career doing what matters most to clients: listening. For Lowe, building a second home for any client is the highest compliment the job offers. He has now done so three times.

The Ragsdale build required every bit of his experience. Lowe had to renegotiate county drainage easements—a process that added roughly six months to the timeline. Then construct large retaining walls engineered to tame the slope. Height restrictions tied to the topography further shaped what could be built and where.

The wall that greets guests was a deliberate choice over the open sightlines many homes have. Marta anticipated the skepticism about this design choice and embraced it anyway.







"We had to design the house somewhat around the lot," Lowe explains.

After purchasing the property, Marta and Michael waited a full year before circling back with Lowe to start the process. They walked the site regularly—just a mile from their existing home—and let the vision slowly take shape. "I'm an accountant by profession, so I think in very linear terms," Marta says. "Having that time to figure out exactly what I wanted made the whole process smoother."

Lowe recommended architect Rob Hepker—a happy coincidence, since Hepker had previously designed plans for the lot's original owners and already understood its quirks. Over six months, Marta and Rob worked through revision after revision of his original drawings, Marta using strips of paper



and whiteout to sketch alternative layouts over printed plans. "Working on the plans is my favorite part of the whole process," she admits. "Even more than moving in."

Hepker proved a true collaborator. Among his contributions is a curved hallway connecting the front entry to the guest wing and garage. "He suggested the curve, and I loved it immediately," Marta says. "It makes you feel like something is happening." The curve inspired a handful of arched doorways



Marta was specific about layered lighting throughout the home. The guiding principle was that overhead fixtures would play a secondary role to accent lighting in every room.

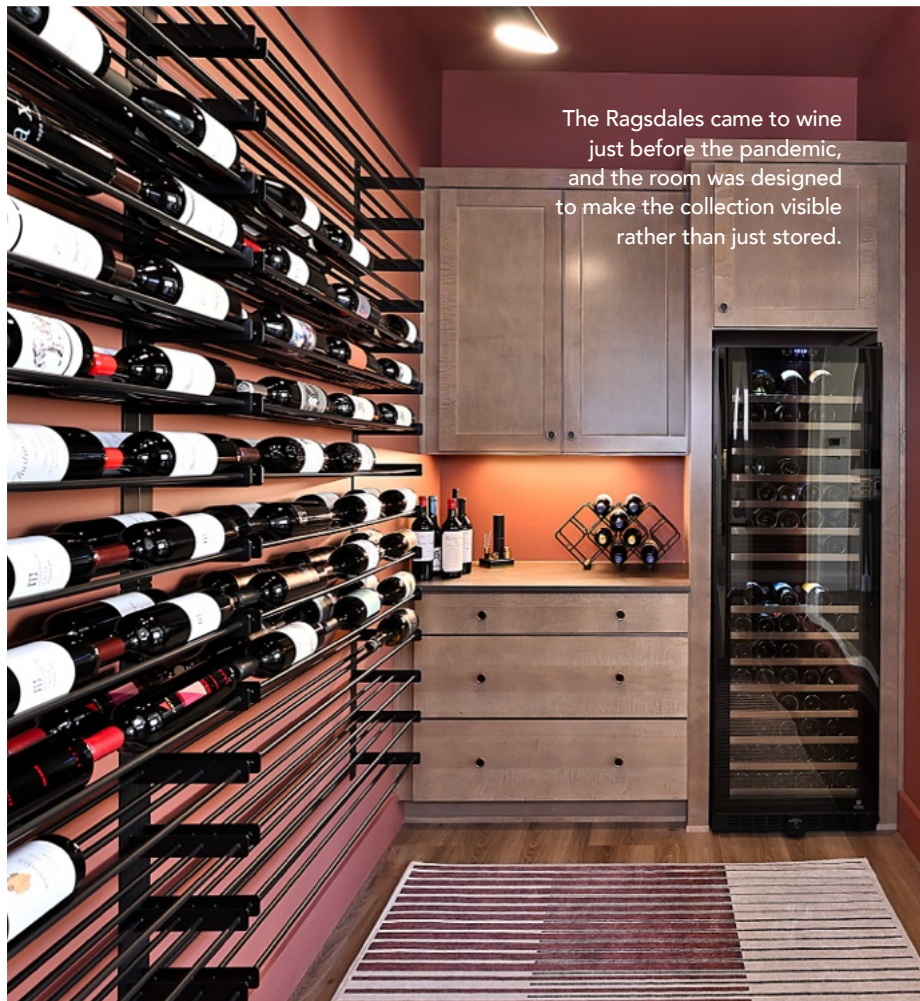
throughout—subtle nods to softness that keep the architecture from feeling rigid.

If Marta's first Lowe-bo home reflected the design trends of its era—cool grays, crisp contrasts—this one charts a warmer course. Warm white walls, medium-toned wood flooring and layered lighting create a picture-perfect backdrop for textural elements that add dimensionality to the palette. Terracotta accents, greens

that echo the landscape and touches of navy complete the picture. "I wanted something that felt cozy, not like a museum," she says. "A space that actually gets lived in."

The kitchen became the room where every detail mattered most. Marta chose white appliances with warm gold-toned hardware set against wood cabinetry that reaches to the ceiling—a deliberate departure from the stainless and slate of her previous home. A generous





The Ragsdales came to wine just before the pandemic, and the room was designed to make the collection visible rather than just stored.

service pantry creates a seamless workflow between cooking and entertaining without overwhelming the intimate scale of the main space.

The Ragsdales designed this home with their own lives in mind—retirement, grandchildren, two daughters visiting and a great deal of quiet time together. The entry leads not to an open sweep of rooms but to a deliberately placed wall, forcing an intimate turn—on the other side, the dining room awaits. “A lot of people wouldn’t like that,” Marta acknowledges. “But to me, it adds intimacy. You discover the house as you move through it.”

A room that doubles as a home office and den features a fireplace, seating, TV and ceiling speakers. An exercise room, wine room and large primary closet with an island round out a floor plan that anticipates how two people will actually live. The wine room—walls, ceiling and trim all painted the same deep Bordeaux tone—is both storage and atmosphere. “We really got into wine right before COVID,”





Marta says, “and I wanted a room that felt designed for that.”

The primary bathroom is designed as a spa retreat with his-and-hers sinks, backlit mirrors and a freestanding soaking tub. A dedicated makeup and hair station with built-in cabinetry was a priority. Behind the tub, a private door leads to a raised patio where a seven-by-seven hot tub occupies its own sheltered corner—entirely separate from the main entertaining areas. “If we have people over, you don’t have to see it,” she says. “It’s just ours.”

No tour is complete without the cat room—roughly the size of a powder room, dedicated entirely to Marta’s cat Bowser, who had his own room in the previous home too, decorated with photographs of its sole occupant. Three dog doors are fitted throughout the home, awaiting the dog that the couple plans to adopt soon.

By the time Marta’s brother and sister-in-law arrived from Iowa for the holidays, the house was fully settled—art on the walls, everything in its place, not a tradesperson in sight. That seamless transition, Marta says, is a hallmark of working with Lowe, who held weekly on-site meetings and maintained near-daily contact throughout. “He doesn’t want you to move in until it’s ready. And it really was.”

On the edge of Albuquerque, at the end of a road where a misfit lot once sat empty and overlooked, they got it exactly right. 

resources

Architecture

Hepker, Inc.

Home Builder

Lowe-bo Homes
lowe-bohomes.com

Appliances

Builders Source Appliance Gallery

Audio/Visual System/Security

Albuquerque Sound & Vac
abqsoundandvac.com

Bathroom/Kitchen Fixtures

Doc Savage Supply

Beams

Hunter Bower Lumber

Cabinetry

Diamondback Building Products

Countertops

Rocky Mountain Stone
rmstone.com

Fireplaces

Mountain West Sales
mountainwestsales.net

Flooring/Kitchen Backsplash

Ray’s Flooring Specialists, Inc.

Front Door

Pat’s Doors

Garage Doors

Wayne Dalton Sales & Service
of Albuquerque

Interior Doors

Builders FirstSource

Kitchen Hood

RBCO Woodworking (frame)
Char Construction (drywall)

Lighting

Bright Ideas, Inc.
lightingfordesign.com

Metal Fabrication

Payless Fence Co.

Wall Finish

White Mountain Painting

Windows

Western Building Supply, Inc.
westernbuildingsupply.com