



# *Joie de Vivre*

Written by Donna Pizzi » Photos by Blackstone Edge » [blackstoneedge.com](http://blackstoneedge.com)

Brian Schmidt and his team of subcontractors achieved what everyone thought was an impossible task: building “Joie de Vivre,” a complex, ultra-modern home for the 2015 NW Natural Street of Dreams in six short months.



“ Joie de Vivre was the most rewarding thing I’ve done in my 17 years as a builder to date.”  
- BRIAN SCHMIDT

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TOP: The homeowners wanted simple, easy-to-clean, timeless interiors, which inspired the kitchen’s grain-matched white maple cabinetry as well. BOTTOM: The backyard water feature trimmed in stone incorporates steel “gone natural.”

PREVIOUS PAGE: Joie de Vivre’s dramatic floor-to-ceiling, aluminum-framed windows are rarely found in residential homes. TOP: The sculptural staircase is warmed by wood contrasted with metal texture for beauty. MIDDLE: Stone and wood express the home’s sleek, contemporary lines, which are also found in its outdoor rooms (right).





“The design stood out as a Frank Lloyd Wright style, for which I had some immediate ideas.”

- ROBERT LUSSIER, NW OUTDOOR LIVING AND LANDSCAPES

When Brian Schmidt was given the Home Builder Association's Builder of the Year Award on December 1, 2015, he must have felt like Baseball Hall of Famer Babe Ruth at bat! Schmidt's "Joie de Vivre" had already swept the 2015 NW Natural Street of Dreams® awards in Lake Oswego with 17 out of 21 awards. The Home Builder Association (HBA) award acknowledged the impeccable craftsmanship, quality and Herculean effort of being brought late into the game yet finishing on time.

"The multimillion-dollar home design was elegant and simple," says Schmidt of home designer Mike Barclay's work, "but I had to put together a six-month non-linear construction schedule that was far more complex than most houses built in 12 months or more."

He started by digging out the complicated basement, framing the three-story house, and then spending 3.5 weeks constructing the window frames and installing 15,000 pounds of glass windows, using a Gradall Telescopic Forklift with boom and computerized vacuum attachments. With social media already "in play," Brian Schmidt Builder's Facebook posts chronicled the arduous task with eye-popping time-lapse videos.

On July 12, at 5:30 a.m.—17 days before the opening—Schmidt was on-site, tearing down the sheetrock masking. "Texture was falling in my face, and the place was crawling with an army of tradespeople: tile setters, plumbers, landscapers and electricians. People probably thought I was off my rocker," says Schmidt. "There were a lot of naysayers, but I'm

not a typical builder in how I lead my projects. Despite the chaos, every subcontractor was able to execute as planned."

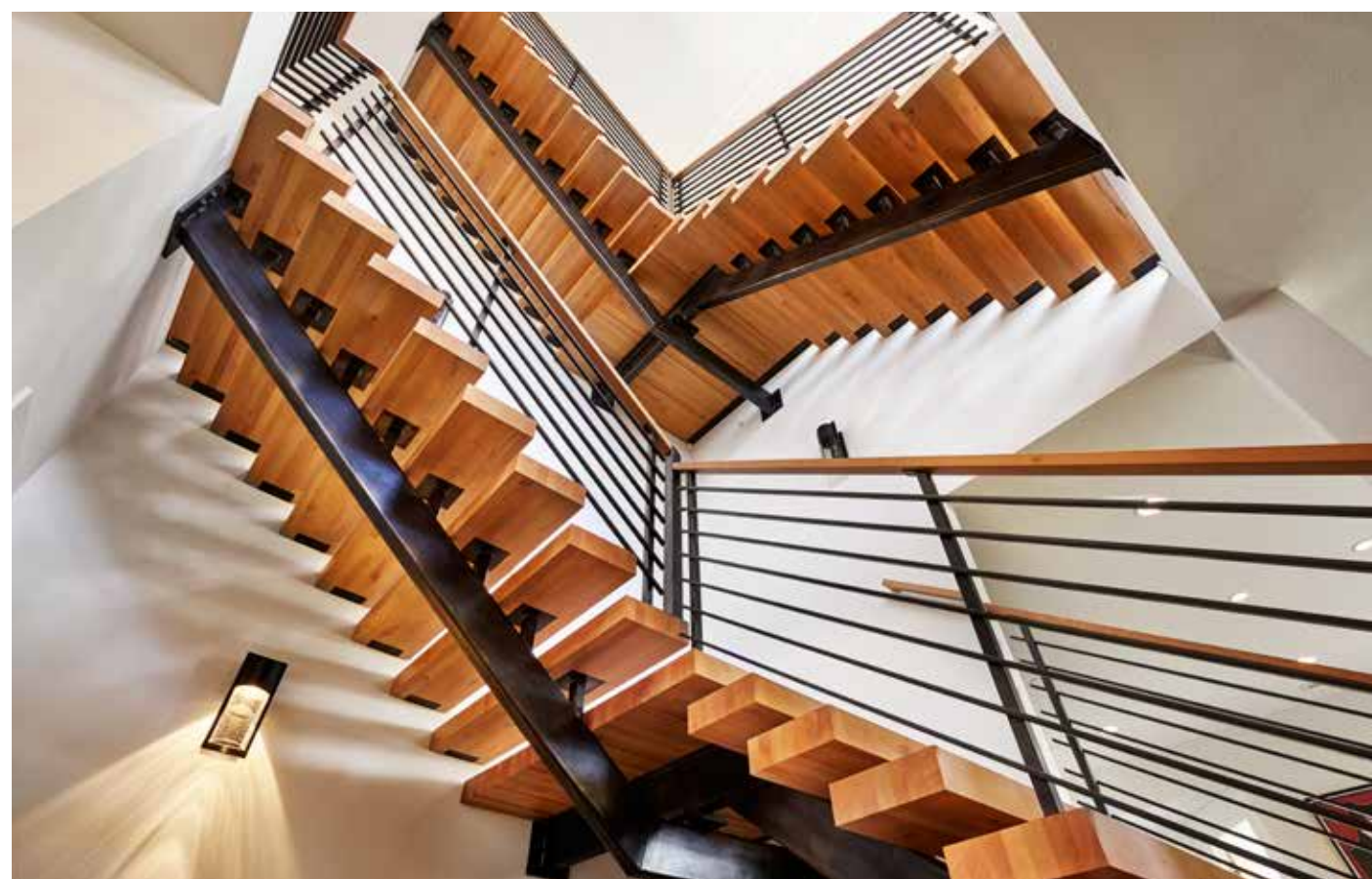
"Brian is unique," says Rachel Trice of the HBA. "Even though he came in late in the process, he had a positive, fun spirit about all the people who doubted him." His response to the negativity was to make a shirt that trumpeted his staunch belief: "Yes, I Will Finish!"

Doubt was still high that day, given that Schmidt's team had been working without stairs to the upper floors for four weeks. Enter MW Design Workshop ready to install the real show-stopper: the sculptural entry staircase rising out of the basement and up to the second floor. Owner Alex Zukowski's original sketch depicted the feel of a floating, cantilevered structure that was strong yet had a lightweight feel. "We wanted the tread to be more monolithic to show off the grain and warmth of the wood, which we contrasted with the steel," he says.

"Alex, his son Josiah and team brought in the metal and wood pieces they had fabricated in their shop, which is a huge thing in the trade," says Schmidt, "laid out a grid, and seamlessly executed the installation in five days, making it look easy."

Carl Senour of Cascade Woodworking created the white maple cabinetry to suit interior designer Ronda Divers' desire and the homeowners' desire for a light, contemporary design. "The cabinetry's simple, clean lines make an easy-to-clean, timeless look that lets the matching grain show through," says Senour.

Robert Lussier of NW Outdoor Living &



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The landscape, designed to match the look and feel of the architecture, won both the Landscape and Outdoor Living "People's Choice" awards. Good communication between Schmidt, builders, framers and MW Design helped them create a three-story staircase that fits the space like a glove. Built-ins tucked between kitchen, pantry and garage provide storage, organization and clutter control.



“It’s a once-in-a-lifetime experience for builders. The [Home Builders Association] assists builders with the stipulations and parameters.”

- RACHEL TRICE,  
HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

LEFT: Nubbly multi-colored stone contrasts rough with plain, as wood intersects with stone, metal, aluminum and concrete flooring.

for builders. The HBA assists builders with the stipulations and parameters. Brian’s house also got out HBA’s message: The show isn’t just an over-the-top dream land; it’s a way to promote new product and ideas, and the benefits of buying or building new homes with builders who can meet attendees’ price point and goals.”

‘Joie de Vivre’ was the most rewarding thing I’ve done in my 17 years as a builder to date,” says 41-year-old Schmidt, who donned a second T-shirt upon receipt of the certificate of occupancy, which read, “Yes, I Am Finished!”

“The award-winning home,” adds Schmidt, “is a testament to the hard work, communication and contribution of all involved, clients included.”

Landscaping was excited when he saw the “Joie de Vivre” renderings for the first time. “The design stood out as a Frank Lloyd Wright style, for which I had some immediate ideas,” he says.

Using 3-D graphic software, Lussier created virtual landscaping that Schmidt and the homeowners could walk through, which reiterated the home’s linear lines, and incorporated steel and masonry into the ponds, planters and waterfalls.

Lussier says Schmidt was a coach who encouraged everyone. “Building a house and putting in a landscape can be very stressful, so it’s nice when you find someone like Brian who has done it enough to know how to walk you through it and make it enjoyable.”

“It’s really challenging to be in the Street of Dreams,” says Trice, who notes that the 2015 show had the best attendance and fiscal results in seven years, “but it’s also a once-in-a-lifetime experience

RIGHT: “Control your environment,” says Lussier, “and people will use their outdoor rooms more. Make it warm and waterproof for when it rains.”

