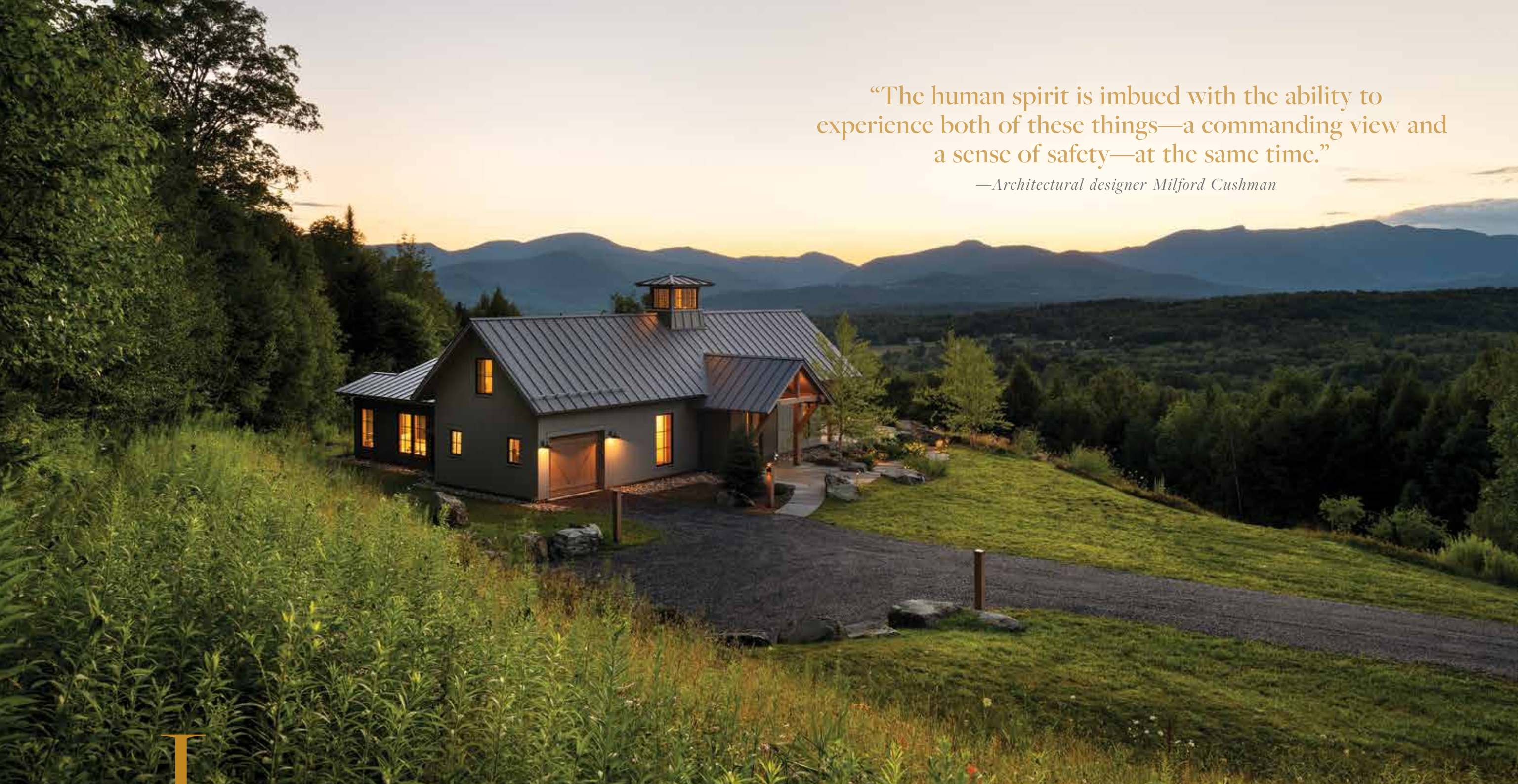


PEAK SEASON

Hillside guesthouse, party headquarters, or private sanctuary?
It depends on who's in town. *Text by BOB CURLEY | Photography by RYAN BENT*



The great room and patio share the same panoramic views of the Green Mountains. Natural wood, stone, earth tones, and restrained fabric choices give the room its comfortable rustic-chic look. **FACING PAGE:** A cupola and metal roof lend the retreat its barn-like appearance, but a sturdy portico made from Douglas fir adds bucolic character and keeps the two-story structure from feeling too boxy.



“The human spirit is imbued with the ability to experience both of these things—a commanding view and a sense of safety—at the same time.”

—Architectural designer Milford Cushman

Landscape theorist Jay Appleton asserted that people are instinctively drawn to spaces where they can observe their environment without being detected. The concept has a fancy name—the prospect-refuge theory—but in the case of a hillside home in Stowe, Vermont, it’s best proven from a freestanding bathtub with bird’s-eye views of the Green Mountains.

Dubbed Peak Sanctuary, the two-bedroom

retreat, designed by Milford Cushman, president and founder of Cushman Design Group, for clients Nancy and Tim Taussig, embraces the idea that “the human spirit is imbued with the ability to experience both of these things—a commanding view and a sense of safety—at the same time,” Cushman says. And while the vistas are spectacular from nearly everywhere in this modestly proportioned home standing at an elevation of 1,450 feet, those from

the cloistered primary bath are unsurpassed.

That’s no accident, says interior designer Carol Flanagan. “The whole project started—design-wise—with the bathroom,” which, when counting the transparent barn doors providing access from the primary bedroom, has walls comprised primarily of glass on all four sides.

“When you’re in the tub and it’s snowing, you feel like you’re in a snow globe,” says Tim Taussig.

Peak Sanctuary, as the retreat is known, is located on a small lot up the hill from the couple’s main residence in Stowe, Vermont. The team at Cushman Design Group carefully positioned the structure so that the great room, patio, and primary bath have views that are both unobstructed and shielded from wandering eyes by the long, narrow body of the home.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: The open kitchen, contiguous with the great room, reflects the home's role as a hub for entertaining: the elevated table blends formality and comfort while also allowing diners to peer over the great room furniture and drink in the mountain views. A live-edge coffee table harmonizes with the overhead cross beams and the rough-hewn granite mantel on the nearby fireplace. A small under-stair space was carved out for a powder room, with Wayne Pate + Studio Four NYC wallpaper adding a cheerful pop of color.



Of course, there's more to the house than the bath: a great room with a twenty-eight-foot-tall window wall comprises nearly half of the square footage, and an expansive bluestone patio with firepits rivals the open-plan, European spa-like *salle de bain* for attention.

Despite its lofty title, Peak Sanctuary began as a modest proposal. The Taussigs, who had worked

with Cushman on two renovations of their primary residence, wanted a small retreat that took advantage of the superior views further uphill from the main house on a flat sliver of land that previously had been the site of a family wedding.

"It started with the idea of one bedroom, one level, but at some point, it occurred to them that their kids are getting older, so it may be a good idea

to build a small guesthouse," recalls Cushman.

Vermont's ubiquitous barns provided design inspiration, but while barns tend toward the rough and masculine, Cushman strove to soften the design with curvilinear elements like bowed cross-tiers on the beams supporting the great room's soaring ceiling and arched doorways in the primary suite that echo the shape of the prominent tub.



The primary bath is a virtual glass cube with its see-through barn-door entry, walk-through subway-tile-clad shower, and BainUltra tub, where users can soak up both the bubbles and the scenery.



ABOVE: The west-facing patio means unobstructed sunsets from a private perch that's only 400 feet away from the main residence via a stone-paved bridal walk, originally created by Cushman Design Group for a family wedding. **RIGHT:** The sunken firepit is a family gathering place even when Peak Sanctuary isn't in use. **FACING PAGE:** A wrought-iron bed frame by Made Goods helps keep the second-floor guest room feeling light and airy like the rest of the retreat.

A sturdy portico of Douglas fir helps break up the boxy outline of the two-story home, and a variety of durable native woods stand up to harsh Green Mountain winters. "It's a serene and natural space but also luxurious in its lighting and amenities," notes Flanagan.

Taussig jokes that with its basement pool table and large-screen TV, "our sanctuary has become a party house," but the truth is that Peak Sanctuary lives up to its name each time the kids and grandkids are in town. As it turns out, the couple loves the place so much that it's usually them, not the guests, who end up walking the path to the hideaway, ceding the main house to the visitors. "It's a place to relax and get away from everything that's going on down the hill," Flanagan says.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN:
Cushman Design Group
INTERIOR DESIGN: Flanagan Interiors
BUILDER: Michael G. Baumann

