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# WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

*Bringing the inside out to the banks of Gore Creek*

by STEPHEN LLOYD WOOD • photos courtesy SHEPHERD RESOURCES/GIBEON PHOTOGRAPHY

WITH REMODELS, THERE'S not always a case for making sweeping, and expensive, changes to a home's existing windows — but in the instance of this luxury, single-family residence on the banks of Vail's Gore Creek, the chance to greatly

expand transparency and bring the great outdoors inside presented itself in no uncertain terms.

"The roofs leaked, and the new owner called us to put things back together; he knew it was a good opportunity to make things better," says Travis Cremonese, project manager

for EagleVail-based Shaeffer Hyde Construction, the home's builder for its original owner years earlier. "He'd been considering doing something with windows; the leak and subsequent repairs sort of pushed the issue.

"It was a substantial remodel, for sure," Cremonese adds, explaining

the windows scenario was just part of a much larger undertaking. "But now it's like a whole new home."

### **'Things will just emerge'**

First thing Cremonese did was help the owner find an architect. They ultimately settled on Doug DeChant, principal architect at



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Shepherd Resources, Inc., who, with his senior associate, Ryan Wolffe, went to work on a two-year project resulting in a home that better shared its nearby Gore Creek riparian environment, along with spectacular mountain views for which the design of its predecessor did not provide.

"When you open your ears, and you open your eyes, these things will just emerge. We need to listen to the client, and we need to listen to the land. What are the two essential elements saying to us?" DeChant says, adding his first thought upon visiting the existing home was disappointment to the point he felt something needed to be rescued. "Its relationship with the creek was almost nonexistent, especially, from the primary living areas; and the southern sunshine we relish here in this climate couldn't even penetrate into these primary spaces.

"There's a ridgeline view across the valley that flows right past the home, and you wouldn't even know it was there when you walked in because the windows were so poorly arranged," DeChant adds. "The glory of this property is Gore Creek, and you had no sense it was even there."

Wolffe says everyone involved realized the property itself was "truly amazing" — but they pondered, too, just "how



amazing it could be with a different house on it."

Instead of bulldozing the site and starting over, he says, they decided to leave the existing foundation and some of the framing in place, replace the heavily-gabled roof with one of more modern design and build new exterior walls that would lend themselves to a much larger array of glass than the original architects had envisioned.

#### **'A wall of glass'**

"The original house was just gable after gable after gable; we were looking at ways to open up the views. One of the ways

we could do that was to do away with the problem, which was the gables themselves," Wolffe says. "(Below), we basically created a wall of glass that essentially was doors, and when they open up there is no structure visible. All the windows along the north wall actually are doors — to bring in the outside noises and warmth from the summer."

Cremonese, meanwhile, says the greatest challenge with respect to windows was at the home's western end, with dramatic views straight down a stretch of Gore Creek after it bends around the home's spruce-scaped backyard. With the architects adding an

expansive deck to the northwest corner of the structure and floor-to-ceiling sliding-glass doors along the entire northern wall of the home's main level, it came down to having two of those doors meet at a corner, pocketed seamlessly, so as to minimally interrupt the sweeping vista that includes not only the creek but a vast reach up the Red Sandstone Creek Valley, part of the Gore Range, to the north.

"There's a substantial amount of steel beam above each of those doors that really carry the structure," Cremonese says. "So, we were able to open up that entire corner and have a real

indoor-outdoor relationship. It was quite a challenge to pull off."

#### **'A big transformation'**

For the windows themselves, the team called upon the Vail Valley's premiere distributors of such high-quality products, Alan-Bradley Windows & Doors, based in Eagle.

"Remodels are a huge part of our business. We'll have window packages for remodels in the millions of dollars," says the company's owner, Brad Wright. "They replaced all the windows in that home. It was a big transformation."

Wright first brought in a



complete package of UV-resistant, copper-framed windows by Oregon-based JELD-WEN Windows & Doors, Inc. and Wisconsin's Kolbe Windows & Doors.

"A lot of windows in that home are framed in copper, not aluminum. It's a unique window package in that the windows on the outside are copper," Wright says. "It's a living finish, a material that will patina, so it will change with time. There's a lot of copper panels

on the exterior of the home, so they wanted the windows to go with the copper siding."

***'Bringing the inside out'***

Wright then brought in massive Liftslide doors weighing nearly 500 pounds each, manufactured by Weiland Sliding Doors and Windows, Inc., in San Diego, with two of them meeting at that dramatic corner looking over the creek.

"It's pretty unique. We do find ourselves doing doors like that

more and more with new homes, though, so in that regard it's becoming more commonplace for an ultra-high-end home," Wright says, estimating the cost of the windows alone for this home at about \$300,000. "In that particular location, it's a very beautiful example of what those doors can do for an indoor-outdoor living space, opening up an entire deck and bringing the inside out, completely opening up that entire area."

In the end, for Shaeffer Hyde

Construction — which built the original home before being called in again for a complete remodel — the subsequent project was a success.

"The greatest reward for us always is making the owner happy. Just trying to carry through the vision he and the architects had really gives a sense of accomplishment," says Cremonese. "That they're happy in the end, honestly, is always the best for us. It's all about the satisfaction of the client." **VWH**