

Ridge House

Tucked between a field and the forest's edge, Ridge House straddles a gentle gradient, offering a deeply contextual response to topography that sublimates the architecture to the land. We leveraged landform to optimize privacy and orient views while the sculptural roof — the home's most defining and deferential feature — behaves like an extension of the terrain.

Designed to prioritize our clients' desire for a signature sloping roof and four-season intimacy with nature, Ridge House is both open to and protected from the elements by virtue of its siting. We devised a siting strategy that leads with the land and works with the property's constraints — a naturally occurring downslope, a high water table, and a prominent ironwood tree — to embed the house in its surroundings while optimizing visual and physical connections to the ironwood and pine forest at the edge of the clearing. The large sloping roof floats above the field's horizon while the front façade remains concealed from the main road.

Ridge House privileges passive-first strategies as well as high-performance materials and systems. Deep-set overhangs shield the floor-to-ceiling triple glazing on the east and west elevations, mitigating solar gain in the warmer months and letting the lower winter sun's rays penetrate the home during the colder ones. Glass accordion doors on the west façade work in concert with retractable insect screens to create protected mid-door spaces from which to enjoy the outdoors comfortably, even during bug season. These fully operable doors, which enable powerful passive ventilation and significantly reduce the need for air conditioning in the summer, open out to a cantilevered walkway that was designed to emphasize the property's soft pitch. Nestling the house within the declivity also helps provide shelter from strong winds and brings it closer to the cooling effects of the woods. We eliminated a basement from the design in light of the high water table, which also decreased the project's overall reliance on concrete.

Our clients desired a tranquil home that blurs inside and outside, with an explicit preference for monochromatism, matte finishes, and natural materials. Not only did we design with the land, we also found imaginative ways to bring nature and its rhythms into the interior experience. The principal bathroom looks out to an enclosed garden space — the open secret that sits at the heart of the home. Located beneath a rectangular opening in the roof structure, the garden reaches skyward while remaining protected by wood screens that cast playful shadows on the ground. The negative space created by this internal courtyard enables additional light to filter obliquely into the adjacent components of the program. Strategically staggered skylights bounce daylight off the vaulted ceilings and adjacent walls in the living and dining rooms to cast diffuse illumination across the home. A firepit on the home's southwest corner sits under a vaulted plywood ceiling while the soft grey of the kitchen extends the grey exterior cladding on the piers, bringing the outside in.

Built to withstand the rural Ontario elements, Ridge House was designed with durability as a chief priority. From the standing seam roof and exterior siding to the marine-grade plywood and prefabricated millwork stained with a low-VOC, water-based coating that absorbs light and protects against scratches, mould, and stains, the home is a robust, low-maintenance architectural structure that was built to last — and perform — for the long-term. High-efficiency zoned in-floor radiant heating provides targeted temperature control while the cold-climate heat pump, combined with Ontario's clean energy grid, minimizes carbon consumption for heating and cooling. The Energy Recovery Ventilator mechanical system optimizes air quality by bringing in fresh air while simultaneously enhancing thermal comfort.

Location: Grey County, Ontario, Canada

Size: 3,175 sf

Completed: 2024

Photography: doublespace photography

Team

Architect: Superkül

Structural Engineer: Kieffer Structural Engineering

Mechanical: Fire House HVAC Designs Inc.

Contractor: J.W. Gordon Custom Builders Inc.

Landscape: Saraga Taylor Landscape Architects

Geotechnical: Terraprobe

Millwork: Coates Creek Cabinetry

Lighting: Dark Tools