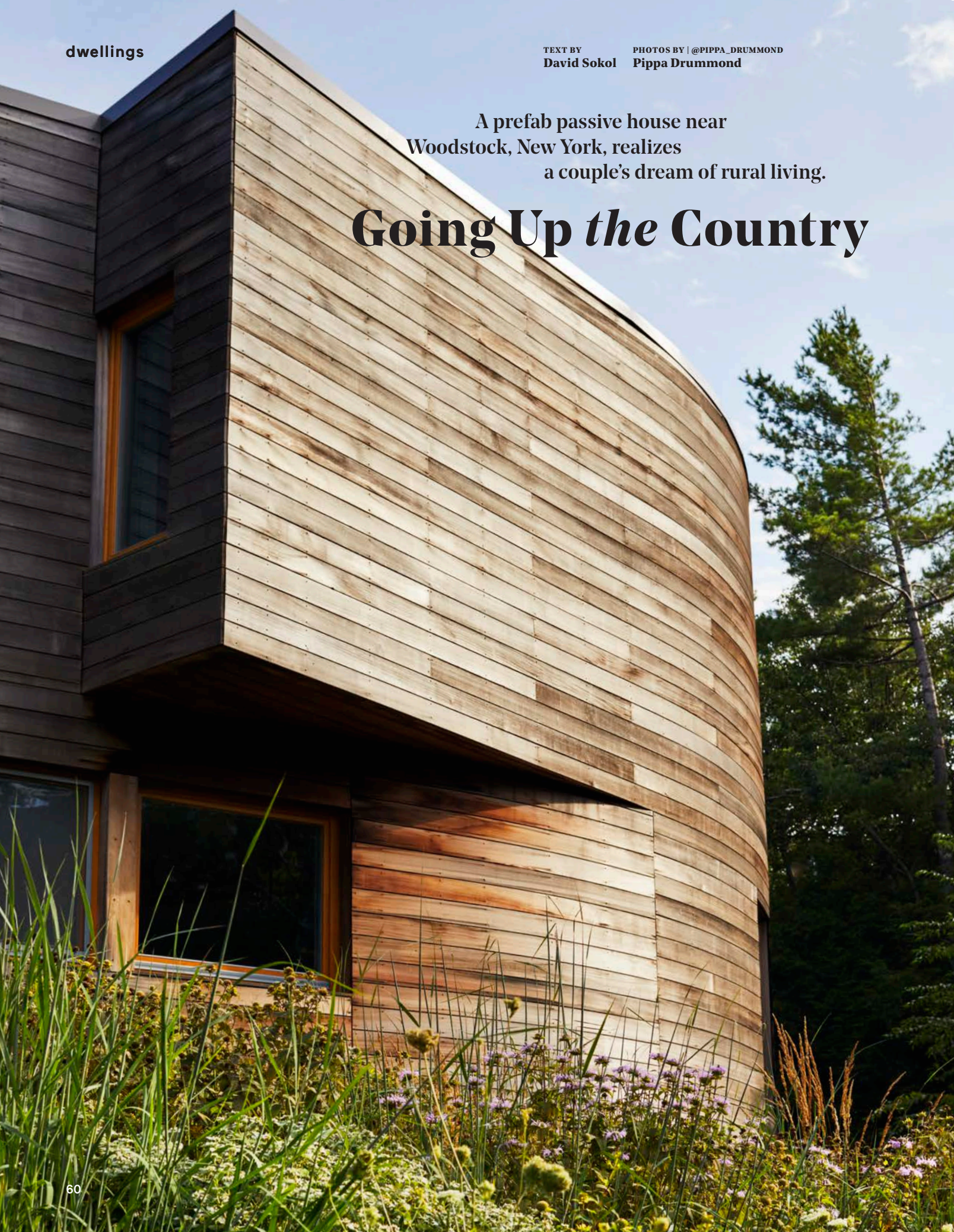


A prefab passive house near Woodstock, New York, realizes a couple's dream of rural living.

Going Up *the Country*



Adrian Bueno and Yvette Leeper-Bueno sit on the simple platform porch that extends from the living room of their weekend retreat in Saugerties, New York. The cedar-wrapped house, designed by BriggsKnowles A+D, is gently curved at the center (opposite).



“The multilayered approach to this house—the use of healthy materials, the prefab, the relation to nature—has definitely changed our practice.” LAURA BRIGGS, ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNER

Woodstock, New York, has beguiled artists, free spirits, and Manhattan-fleeing professionals for more than a century. Adrian Bueno and Yvette Leeper-Bueno joined the ranks of the enchanted the first time they visited more than 20 years ago. At the time, day trips and the occasional vacation rental were all the then newlyweds could afford, but they continued dreaming about having a more permanent stake in this corner of the Catskill Mountains region. So when the couple saw a stunning six-acre site for sale in Saugerties on a spring day in 2012, they made an offer on the spot.

In the intervening years, Adrian and Yvette had also assembled something of a design squad. In 2005, Jonathan Knowles and Laura Briggs of BriggsKnowles A+D

created a primary residence for them in Harlem, and interior designer Jonsara Ruth worked with Yvette on her nearby restaurant, Vinatería, which opened in 2013. Shortly after receiving news about the pending land purchase, they all hustled upstate for reconnaissance.

The property abuts Sloan Gorge Preserve, an almost entirely hidden, 88-acre canyon at the base of the Catskills’ Overlook Mountain that includes swaths of pines, various oaks, and mountain laurel, interspersed dramatically with ledges of bluestone. “I pictured building a house on this huge rock,” Adrian says of a large outcropping on the site. “I imagined a sailboat in the middle of the forest.” He and his wife asked the collaborators-turned-friends to work together on that idea, and over the next two years, the group transformed the couple’s vision into a house that was prefabricated by Bensonwood in New Hampshire and then assembled on-site in just two weeks. Cabinetry and surfaces were wrapped up in 2015. The landscaping, an admittedly ongoing project, required a few more seasons.

The realized “land ship” has a totemic quality that makes it appear larger than its 1,500 square feet, thanks to its mooring atop the bluestone ledge. Roof extensions on the east and west ends of the two-story building make the cedar-clad structure seem all the more impressive by elongating its curved plan into a boomerang shape with wings that semi-enclose a porch and the master-bedroom sundeck. “We tried to create a meandering quality,” Knowles says of the design. Briggs compares ambling around the house to exploring the nearby canyon.

The interior journey takes its cues from the natural environment. Walking through the arcing house reveals folds, niches, and overlooks finished in locally >



The dining area includes a custom table by interior designer Jonsara Ruth, Søren chairs from Room & Board, and a Skan pendant from Vibia. The kitchen countertops are soapstone and the faucet is by Axor. All of the home’s interior walls were finished in plaster. In the living room (opposite), cork flooring meets a fir staircase. The lofted family room features a chair from the Danish Design Store and a Grasshopper floor lamp by Greta Grossman for Gubi.

Using exclusively native plants, landscape designer Karin Ursula Edmondson created a layered garden of creeping sedges, ornamental grasses, bee balm, mountain mint, shrubby St. John's wort, fragrant sumac, and more. "The eco-system of the site was so spectacular, it was all I needed for inspiration," she says.

"The request for grasses and the directive for a soothing green landscape dictated that the gardens be wildish in nature."

KARIN URSULA EDMONDSON, LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

sourced or reclaimed materials. "You feel like you're still in the landscape when you're inside the house," Ruth says. Briggs and Knowles designed the project according to the strict insulation and energy-efficiency standards of the Passive House Institute, and the interior designer insisted on using only healthy materials, since off-gassing could be particularly harmful in such a tightly sealed building. The house runs entirely on electricity, most of which comes from a solar panel array. Electric bills average only about \$50 a month, says Adrian.

When the house was complete, it immediately became a place of solace. "I meet a lot of people as a restaurateur," says Yvette. "When I come here, I'm looking for a sanctuary where I can reinvest in my own well-being, reconnect with nature, and rest." Yet in the couple's first year of occupancy, the landscape immediately surrounding the house was preventing them from feeling fully enmeshed in the idyll, with invasive mugwort and lawn grasses popping up in the rocky, acidic soil.

So the homeowners added a new member to their crew, tapping Catskills-based landscape designer Karin Ursula Edmondson to transform the remaining visible outcroppings into gardens where native plants could thrive with minimal human intervention. Focusing on the exposed bluestone located beneath the western, most public face of the house, they envisioned grasses to soften the intersection between structure and earth, as well as an overall green-on-green palette that reveals its beauty in the same slow, unfolding manner as the architecture and interiors.

"I'd considered plants that would work for dry shade like hellebores and brunnera, but decided against them because they looked too cultivated—they were better >



The rear garden (opposite) is filled with ferns, sedges, lowbush blueberry, and a poplar tree growing out of a rock face. The master bedroom (below) looks out onto a private, cantilevered deck. “This

house for me is about contemplation,” says Adrian. “You come here from the city and the place is saying, ‘Hi, meet yourself again.’” A closet in the guestroom (right) echoes the home’s shape.



suited for more formal or traditional gardens,” says Edmondson. Instead, she conceived a ground cover comprising native sedges, with rivulets of sedum planted between boulders and in the crevices of a dry-stacked stone retaining wall. Nearer to the house, Edmondson layered in taller ornamental grasses, perennials, and shrubs whose colors harmonize with the cedar cladding and exposed stones. The plantings are mostly self-sowing, and more recently Edmondson has focused on clarifying newer vignettes, such as a patch of shade at the south end of the bluestone ledge and a more formal composition at the front door. Adrian views Edmondson’s continuing work as an extension of the experience of the house. The couple share space with pollinators feasting on St. John’s wort and mountain mint in summer and critters bedding down in the grasses after frost. Human visitors are also welcome and, following in their hosts’ footsteps, are instantly enthralled. As Adrian says, “The songs of the forest, the birds, the wind—everything is beautiful here.” ■

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Saugerties Residence N ①
ARCHITECT **BriggsKnowles A+D** LOCATION **Saugerties, NY**

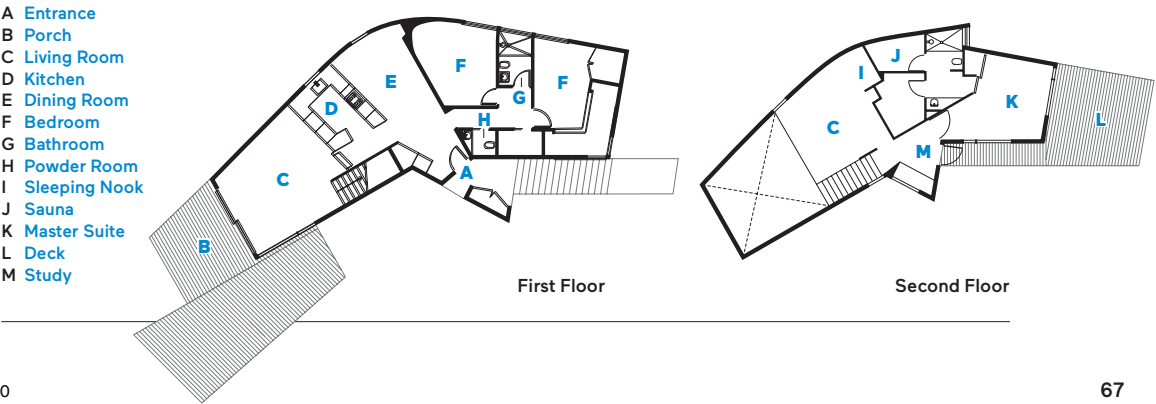


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