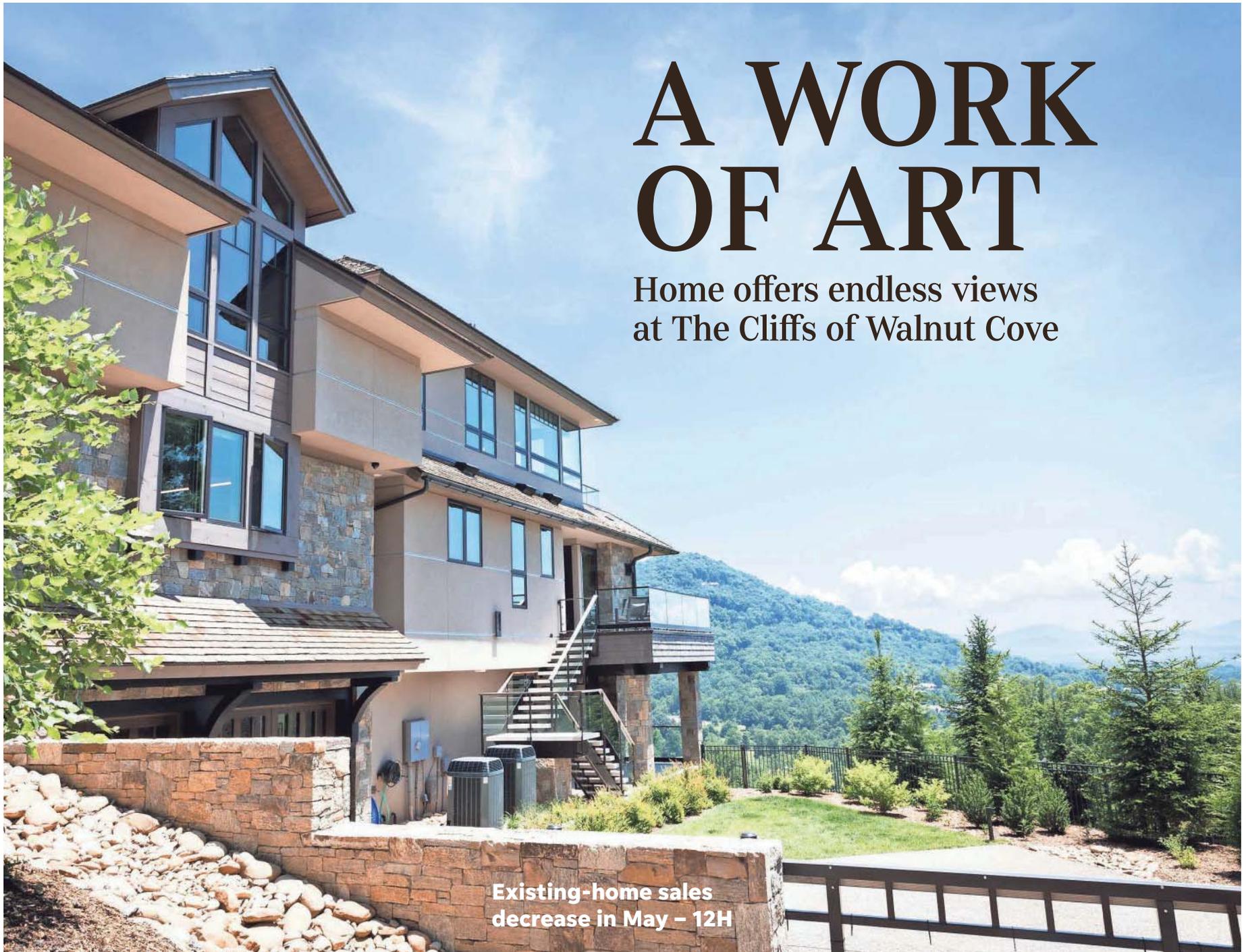


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## A WORK OF ART

Home offers endless views  
at The Cliffs of Walnut Cove

Existing-home sales  
decrease in May - 12H



A contemporary fireplace centers the main living space that flows into a cozy sitting area then into the kitchen and dining space. MATT BURKHARTT/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

# Three levels, endless views

The house itself is a work of art at The Cliffs at Walnut Cove

**Angela Nicholas**

Special to Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Peter and Marty Vexter turned what was to be their vacation home into a full-time residence shortly after they built it, leaving behind 30 years of cold

Chicago weather for more temperate four seasons and remarkable views of the Western North Carolina mountains.

“About five years ago we shoveled 85 inches of snow,” Peter said. “We needed a Plan B, and it was not going to be Florida.”

When the couple visited their son Billy, who was running track at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, they located and purchased a lot in the Arden community southeast of Asheville. They employed Todd Young of

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# Walnut Cove

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Young & Young Architects from Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and builder Dan Collins of Glennwood Custom Homes, in Hendersonville, and began a building process that took close to three years from the planning stage to finish.

After traveling back and forth a few times, the couple said they loved their new home and the “active nature of the mountains” so much, they sold their home in Chicago.

This contemporary, three-story 7,500-square-foot structure sits on 1.52 acres in the gated community of The Cliffs at Walnut Cove. The couple lives in the four-bedroom, six-bath home with their now 14-week-old lagotto romagnolo puppy, Booker, a hypoallergenic Italian truffle dog.

Designed like the unique pieces of local art placed selectively on each level, the house has so many custom features it is itself a work of art. The design includes heated tiled floors in some areas, limestone accents, dry stacked native stone, cedar shakes, stucco and wood.

Twenty-two tons of steel was required due to the cantilevered nature of the home, providing a “rock solid” structure that can resist mountain winds and weather, Peter said.

The front of the house is set back, so a bridge-like water feature was created to flow in cascading waterfalls from the left side of the bridgeway, recirculating underneath to a pool on the right, providing a spectacular entrance to the home.

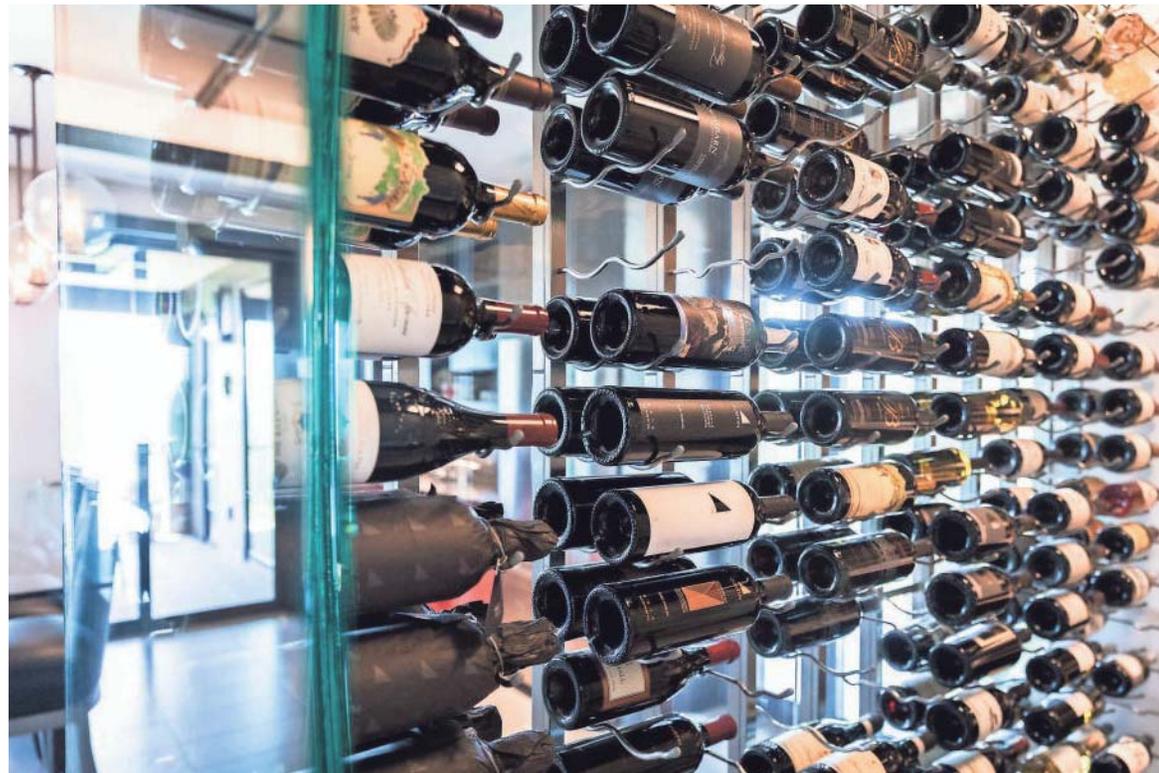
Upon entry, the home features an open floorplan and walls of windows with mitered joints to maximize views from the 2,500-foot elevation. A contemporary fireplace centers the main living space that flows into a cozy sitting area then into the kitchen and dining space.

Windows provide an overview of all of Walnut Cove, distant planes leaving the Asheville Airport and eagles, hawks and hummingbirds in flight. To draw the eye to the view without restricting it, the couple had a narrow perpendicular piece of blown glass framed in metal designed by a local glass artist.

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The view from the master bedroom at the home of Marty and Peter Vexter at the Cliffs at Walnut Cove in Arden. PHOTOS BY MATT BURKHARTT/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES



Stacked wine bottles in a chilled wine room on the ground floor at the home of Marty and Peter Vexter.

# Walnut Cove

Continued from Page 4H

The openness of this main level allows a full span view of granite countertops, custom cabinets, glass subway tile backsplash, a hooded vent over a gas stove and an atrium on the second level.

There is a breakfast terrace that faces east with the Pisgah Mountains on the horizon and the Blue Ridge Parkway to the north. Located just off the main room is a four-season room with folding German Nanawall doors. The sliding walls allow this room to be completely open to the outside, so the room was engineered independently to allow separate control of heat and air so as not to affect the rest of the house. Almost invisible screens can be lowered remotely so “you don’t have a red tail hawk fly in,” Peter said.

On this main level of the house is the master suite, where again glass fills the room with light only to be blocked when remotely controlled shades are lowered, mostly during the day to prevent sun fading. A bed designed for this space and built right in the room has a headboard of cabinets on back and faces the windows where the couple enjoys the nighttime sky.

A TV bench at the foot of the bed allows the television to be raised for watching and lowered to avoid obstructing the windows.

The master deck overlooks the 17th green of the golf course and puts the couple at eye level with hummingbirds. There is a small sitting room and a bathroom with a Jacuzzi tub, glassed-in steam shower, individual vanities and a large walk-in closet with lighted clothes rods on a timer.

Opaque glass double doors lead out of the room into a vestibule where, when left open, the sound of the waterfalls can be heard.

The backside of the house is staggered with decks that jut out from each level, providing views from varying angles. Careful consideration was given to each section of the house to determine the best design to capture views and lighting. There is a ground-level fire pit created to look like a metallic campfire and a back lawn of sewn wildflowers.

Beautifully stained wood accents the home throughout with custom



Openness of the main level allows full view of a kitchen on the second level. PHOTOS BY MATT BURKHARTT/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

cabinets and wood-framed glass doors of alder and flooring of rift-sawn white oak that provides a unique linear appearance. Ceiling heights range from 15 feet in main rooms and up to 25 feet in several atriums with wooden beams and/or customized wood-paneled or coffered ceilings.

Gracing all rooms is exquisite trim carpentry. An elevator provides an alternative to the stairs.

An entertainment room on the lower level features a leather ceiling, a glass-enclosed chilled wine cabinet and a second kitchen.

A highlight of this room is a 2,400-pound original 1924 cast iron red phone booth their designer found in High Point, much to Peter’s delight. A portion of ceiling had to be raised for the dome roof. Rock display cases surround a large screen TV where more art from Asheville’s River Art District are featured including a glass flame personalized for Peter.

On this level are two bedrooms for their son and daughter and her spouse when they visit. There is also a step out lower level of the water feature the couple calls the cigar deck and a storage room that houses the nerve center of the house (audio, TV, sprinkler sys-



An antique phone booth on the ground floor.

tem controls, etc.)

The third level or bonus room that sits above the two double garages — one on main level and one on ground level — is the game room for ping-pong and a great place for competitive

games, Marty said.

She had a bedroom designed with six bunkbeds for future grandchildren or visitors. There are also office spaces for Marty, who is retired, and Peter, who is transitioning out of his own specialty insurance brokerage.

Perhaps the most unique feature of this home is the fire pole that provides a 25-foot drop from the upper garage to the lower garage that has the appearance of a firehouse complete with yellow lines on the floor that make it look like trucks in a bay, fire-red cabinetry and firehouse garage doors. There is even a doggie wash for Booker. The garage is somewhat of a shrine to Peter’s history as a firefighter.

A London native, Peter began a life-long relationship with fire departments at age 18 when he went through the academy to get a job with a London fire brigade, where he remained for eight years. Even after changing his career path to become an insurance broker for a worldwide company called Aon, where he met Marty, he served as a volunteer firefighter and EMT in Clarendon Hills, Illinois, for 20 years.

The couple lost many of their col-

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A look below at a patio and outdoor fire pit at the home of Marty and Peter Vexter at the Cliffs at Walnut Cove in Arden. PHOTOS BY MATT BURKHARTT/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

## Walnut Cove

Continued from Page 5H

leagues in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and most years they return there for the remembrance events but have also established relationships with local fire departments now as well.

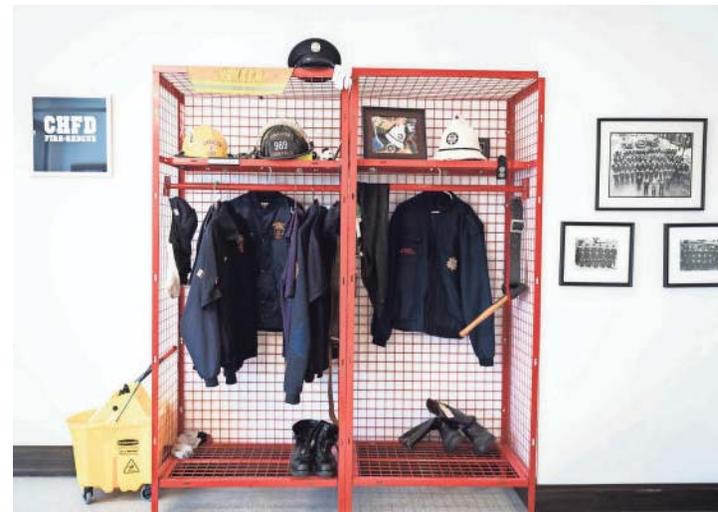
Due to his knowledge of structure fires, Peter insisted his home be fitted with a sprinkler system and was pleased that The Cliffs had the foresight to include fire hydrants in the community, with one located just out-

side his driveway.

"You can get some damage from the water," he said, "but it is easier to deal with than charred remains. People spend more money on granite counter tops than a sprinkler system."

Having the sliding pole was Peter's original dream, he said. The rest of the theme just evolved and provided a way for him to display his photos and memorabilia from his years as a firefighter. Now, he said, he is so pleased with the result, "I just cannot believe how well it has turned out and way beyond what I could have imagined."

Reach freelance writer Angela Nicholas at [aknicholas28@gmail.com](mailto:aknicholas28@gmail.com).



Helmets and jackets from fire departments Peter Vexter previously worked at in one of the garages.