

**Architectural Analysis of 400, Guenther Street**

*By: Architectural Historian  
Shelley Roff, PhD*

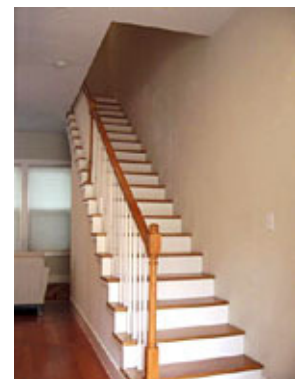
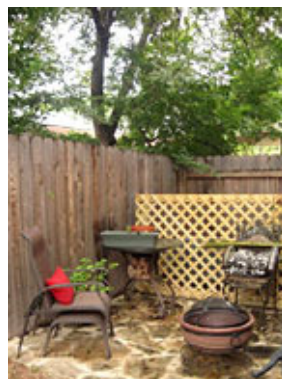


The King William Townhomes were awarded Best New Residential Development in 2005 by the Downtown Alliance. Near the Riverwalk and in the midst of the most beautiful historic neighborhood in San Antonio, the developer James Lifshutz (creator of Blue Star) could not have picked a more desirable location for his new project. On the corner of Guenther and South Alamo, the townhomes provide modern, urban, luxury housing that blends harmoniously with the stately Victorian and Neoclassical mansions built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mr. Lifshutz told us that his goal was to fix that particular corner. There had been a small church there with surface parking, a building that had served its purpose in its time, but was no longer being used. This prominent corner deserved an architectural gem. Mr. Lifshutz envisioned a project that would blend in with the architectural style of the neighborhood, but not try to necessarily replicate what was there. He hired FischerHeck Architects to design a townhome complex which responds beautifully to this request.

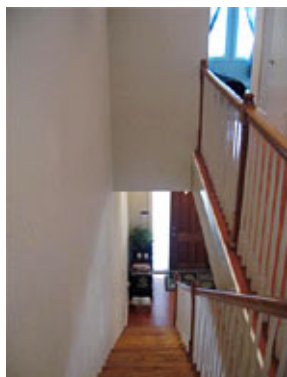


In terms of massing and the relationship with the street, Mr. Lifshutz favored the townhomes he had seen in Georgetown (Washington DC). The stairs go from the street level to the 2nd floor, which often is the main floor. There is a level up and a level down from there. This gives the townhomes a feeling of connection to street life, yet also protects the living spaces from the noise. Built with wood frame construction, a standing-seam metal roof, and wrapped in Hardie board and limestone, the townhomes materially respond to their environs. The gabled roofs, saw cut window frames, and louvered air vents are simplified versions of those details seen in homes nearby.



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The townhome for sale, #3101 is a two-story structure in the back with a garage, private entrance porch, and a lovely outdoor patio in the back shaded by trees. The plan of the home is an interesting combination of traditional and modern concepts. As one might find in a typical Folk Victorian house plan in this neighborhood, the main entrance of the home leads you passed a prominent oak-railed staircase directly to the back of the house.

Traditionally, the living spaces would be off to each side. In this more modern version, the privacy of the home is protected by having the garage out front and the remaining spaces oriented towards the tree-sheltered back. The living room and kitchen spatially open to each other and share the dappled light coming in from the windows.

The spaces are designed to accommodate the way that families prepare meals and socialize together today. The volume of the staircase is also open, like a shaft that penetrates the two floors, giving better visual and social connection between the two. All the other details of the house, the bathroom fixtures, the ceiling fans, light fixtures are contemporary. Only the broad molding covering the seam between the wall and ceiling in each room pays homage to an architectural detail from the past.

