

THIS PLACE-BASED DESIGN CELEBRATES
MONTANA'S AGRARIAN HERITAGE BY
LINKING HISTORIC-INSPIRED FORMS THAT
FRAME THE BEAUTIFUL BRIDGER MOUNTAINS.

THIS MONTANA HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

FOR AMBASSADOR MAX BAUCUS AND HIS WIFE ATTORNEY MELODEE HANES, THE ULTIMATE
DESTINATION WASN'T HALFWAY ACROSS THE GLOBE—IT WAS HOME IN MONTANA.

BY CHRISTY NIELSON
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aving grown up on a ranch near Helena, Mont., Max Baucus—a former United States senator and ambassador to China—wanted to return to his roots when he and his wife, attorney Melodee Hanes, decided to build a new home. The jet-setting power couple, who are active in business, public policy, and international affairs, use Montana as their home base. They selected a community in Bozeman because they love the vistas of the Gallatin Valley. Easy access to the Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport was also a major selling point.

“We can get to China in one stop,” says Hanes. “We never intended to build, but we kept coming back to this property until there just was no other choice. We never regret it for an instant; we love it!”

The team at JLF Architects helped quell their apprehensions about building. “They understood what our needs were and made us feel comfortable about the process,” Hanes remembers. “They were right in tune with what we had envisioned for our home, and we were so impressed with their design creativity.”

The design is a love letter to Montana’s ranching history: a series of homestead-inspired “outbuildings” linked by striking steel and glass connectors. The visual anchor of the property is a two-story reclaimed red barn. For Baucus, the building is more than a garage and caretaker’s apartment—it’s a touchstone.

“Max would get this smile on his face when he talked about

a red barn,” says Ashley Sullivan, architect and co-owner of JLF Architects. “There was something the child in him associated with being home, being safe.”

The architectural vision is best experienced upon approach. Driving up to the property, Sacagawea Peak—the highest mountain in the Bridger Range—is visible through the entry, a modern double-glass breezeway that also functions as the mudroom. “The breezeway is the contemporary piece to connect the old barn to the new home and was intentionally designed to capture the view as you walk up,” says Sullivan.

This “wow-moment” space functions as the landing point for guests before they transition into the Montana fieldstone-clad hallways that lead to the living space. “Right-sized” and comfortable inside, the great room’s dry-stack fieldstone offers an impressive presence from the exterior, resembling one of the area’s old stone creameries. Throughout the residence, other organic materials like ridge beam timbers and steel combine with plaster, painted drywall, and painted cabinetry to artfully blend rustic and modern touches.

“They wanted that feeling of being home—of being grounded in the lifestyle of Montana where the landscape is holding you,” notes Sullivan of the low-slung residence with long sightlines that pay homage to its prairie setting. “The entire material palette was a heartstring for the couple.”

OPPOSITE PAGE: THE GLASS-ENCLOSED BREEZEWAY AND ENTRY IS A BOLD, MODERN COUNTERPOINT CONNECTING THE RUSTIC ELEMENTS IN THE HOME.



THE RECLAIMED RED BARN—HOUSING THE GARAGE AND A CARETAKER'S APARTMENT—IS AN ARCHITECTURAL ANCHOR INSPIRED BY THE OWNER'S CHILDHOOD RANCHING ROOTS.



Sullivan says the couple didn't want a grand house, though the overall feel is luxurious. The flow on the main floor is a scale that two people can live in and not feel overwhelmed by the volume. "Luxury can be as small or as large as you want it to be," she says. "It's knowing that something has been designed well and with thought. Luxury is in the heart. This project is approachable, but it's luxurious in that it's still crafted well and with design."

The dining room—resplendent with a double-sided stone fireplace that also serves the living room—is another signature space. It features glass accordion walls on two sides that fold open to the views, celebrating the property's location. Containing a beautiful chandelier and an antique table from Baucus's childhood home that was refinished for the space, the room offers an effortless indoor/outdoor flow.

"The accordion doors in the dining room have been so wonderful," says Hanes. "It gives us extra room in the front and in the back. When they are closed, it is almost like you're eating outside, but you're not."

LEFT: FAMILY HISTORY TAKES CENTER STAGE IN THE DINING ROOM, WHERE A VIBRANT RUDY AUTIO PAINTING AND A REFINISHED ANTIQUE TABLE BLEND LEGACY WITH HIGH DESIGN.



ABOVE: SATURATED JEWEL TONES AND SUMPTUOUS FABRICS INTRODUCE AN "EAST COAST POLISH" THAT ELEVATES THE HOME'S RUSTIC WESTERN BONES.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A MONUMENTAL DOUBLE-SIDED STONE FIREPLACE PROVIDES A TACTILE, GROUNDING ANCHOR THAT CREATES A COZY AMBIENCE IN THE LIVING AND DINING ROOMS.





THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM: EXPANSIVE, COUNTER-TO-CEILING WINDOWS TRANSFORM THE KITCHEN INTO A SCENIC OVERLOOK, WASHING THE WORKSPACE IN NATURAL LIGHT AND PANORAMIC MOUNTAIN VIEWS; THE BUTLER'S PANTRY KEEPS THE "HEAVY LIFTING" OUT OF SIGHT, ALLOWING THE MAIN KITCHEN TO REMAIN PRISTINE AND LIGHT FILLED; CLAD IN ORGANIC TEXTURES AND SERENE TONES, THE MASTER BATHROOM IS A SPA-LIKE RETREAT.



To complement the architecture, the owners sought a distinct blend of Western authenticity and East Coast polish. Designers Melina Datsopoulos and Logan Stark of Boutique Interiors and Trappings Studio in Missoula used finishes, furniture, and artwork to deliver that sophisticated balance.

"The rooms are well-defined, and we enjoyed designing that way because each room could have its own personality," says Datsopoulos. They incorporated pieces that look like they belong but aren't what you would normally see in a rustic ranch home. "We have these beautiful, saturated colors like the pop of blue in the living room sofa and the raspberry chairs in the kitchen," Datsopoulos explains. Logan adds, "The use of velvet, mohair and other sumptuous fabrics bring the whole aesthetic up a bit, creating a juxtaposition to the organic architecture that makes it feel really luxurious."

The interior design team also repurposed artwork that Baucus inherited from his mother, an ardent collector of Western art. "We reframed the massive piece from famous Montana artist Rudy Autio, breathing new life into it," says Datsopoulos of the colorful painting of a horse that informed the hues used in furniture and the rugs. "It was really cool that we were able to make so many family treasures work in the context of this home."



The kitchen, which Hanes carefully planned for about five years, is designed for both beauty and functionality. An all-glass corner was carved out to offer views of the Bridger Mountains along with easy access to her baking supplies. A clever butler's pantry hides the "heavy lifting" with a central island, ice maker, extra refrigerator, additional dishwasher, and stacked washer and dryer—allowing the main kitchen to remain a sanctuary of counter-to-ceiling glass.

"The pantry gives us the opportunity to enjoy the Western landscape to the fullest and yet have a functional space," Hanes says. "The one thing Max kept saying [to the architects] is 'I want big windows,' and they delivered."

Because the couple has a large family that keeps expanding, the home was designed to accommodate children and grandchildren, while offering privacy for everyone. The two-bedroom guest house and the garage apartment are perfect for those with small children. The primary bedroom is located off the dining room and has a hidden door and double insulation, allowing late-night revelry even after the couple has retired for the night. A double-insulated floor also keeps the noise downstairs to a minimum.

"The family could party all night if they wanted to!" Hanes laughs. "The attention to finish and detail surprised me about this process. We have a very well-constructed home, and it lives perfectly for us."



DRAMATIC GLASS ACCORDION WALLS DISSOLVE THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE REFINED INTERIOR AND THE RUGGED SPLENDOR OF THE GALLATIN VALLEY.

Architect
JLF Architects

Interior Designer
Boutique Interiors and
Trappings Studio

Builder
OSM Builders