

# Home, Home of a Hill

Written by Written by David M. Brown

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Scottsdale architect Nick Tsontakis, AIA, reaffirms Frank Lloyd Wright's dictum of building of the hill, not on it, with this 4,724-sq.-ft. contemporary home in Phoenix.



## Front Approach

Architect Nick Tsontakis introduces the travertine and the granite pattern repeated in the foyer, asserting the outside/inside theme of the home. Ancient Stone, a manufactured product, rests on excavated granite, which is above the foundation and on the site walls. Supporting the portico are 14-foot-high steel columns in groups of four uprights with orbital figures; the architect calls these his signature "Tsontakis columns." On the rear patio, two sets of similar 12-foot-high columns are repeated to support the large overhang. The spaces between the posts provide for unimpeded views and are welcoming light fixtures at night.

**Design Team Architect:** Nick Tsontakis, AIA **Ancient Stone:** Ancient Stone by Vasilios Copper **Roof:** Paul Rich Roofing & Construction

## WORDS TO THE WISE

"While not a living space, the approach to your home is integral. It's an architectural welcome mat for your guests, revealing materials, textures and design." ?—Nick Tsontakis

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## Great Room

The great room authoritatively states many architectural themes, including varying ceilings, recessed rope lighting in the soffits and circularity, so that its ceilings recall those of the entry foyer; other room components, like the curving sofa ensemble, reaffirm this theme. The focal-point dome over the great room, for instance, features concentric circles in white. In addition, over the great room and the exterior pool patio, is a copper conical dome. To the left, through double doors, is the media room and library, and the kitchen is to the right, with a convenient elevator to the garage. Restrained ceiling lights focus on the sculptural piece and piano on the radiused walls.



## Foyer

If the great room is the central theme of the home, the entryway is its overture, preparing guests for the home's dramatic circularity, light, views and spaciousness. Entering, guests experience the great room, the wall of glass, the hillside pool and the views south to downtown and to landmark Piestewa Peak. Here, Tsontakis has placed a dramatic stepped-down ceiling and 24-by-24-inch Turco Classico travertine on the floor

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with an arc of Absolute Black granite surrounding it and forming the hallway baseboards. Note how the triangular niches on either side of the portal contrast with the dominant circularity of both rooms.

## WORD TO THE WISE

“A lot of furniture isn’t required for warmth, welcome and elegance. When furnishings complement the architecture, a vital connection with the home is established.” ?—N.T.

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## Pool Patio

The original traditional home pool Tsontakis and crew filled in; it’s now in the middle of the great room. The new negative-edge pool lifts over the slope. In the 20-foot drop-off from the original site, a rebar shell was built and anchored into the granite. Then, by cantilevering poured slabs, the builder connected the pool shell and the foundation, finally backfilling to create the spacious patio, with its peek-a-boo water features. On the front face, to hide the support work, Tsontakis re-used excavated granite from the slope. Floor-to-ceiling butt-glazed half-inch-thick ultraviolet-treated windows offer views to the pool and beyond.



## Master Bathroom

Above the three-car garage is the spacious master bedroom and master bedroom bath, with a bathtub, which seems to float over the surrounding preserve in its bay window setting. The more practical walk-in shower is just across from this. Views drive the design in the bathroom as throughout the home. Even the corner sitting/dressing area has a private balcony, which features, perhaps, the home’s most pristine desert views. If nature calls, so does nature: Tsontakis has arranged the toilet with creatively placed windows that offer more mountain views while maintaining privacy. Why lose any opportunity to reaffirm a sense of place?

## WORDS TO THE WISE

“Restate architectural elements to connect rooms and maintain an overall spirit. [In the master bathroom,] circular mirror lights recapitulate the form of the radiused shower enclosure and the dominant curves throughout the home.” ?—N.T.