



Inside, the artistic streak long associated with a “Lobo Home” emerges through exposed wood, dark steel, and unexpected material combinations.

Dark siding, mountain stone, and low rooflines reflect Lobo Builders’ philosophy of building with the mountain rather than simply on it.



Built to Belong

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Photography Provided by Lobo Builders

In the mountains of Western North Carolina, this distinctive renovation illustrates why Lobo Builders’ homes earn a name of their own and why the company’s owners believe the best design begins by listening to the land.

Before anyone talked about a “Lobo Home,” the company’s owners, Thomas and Annie Wolfe, had simply been building houses in Western North Carolina in a way people remembered. Megan Bryan, who works with Lobo and previously worked in real estate in both Charleston and Western North Carolina, had known the couple for nearly 20 years, dating back to when she was buying, renovating, and selling houses around Asheville and Greenville. Even then, she remembered something distinctive about Thomas’s work.

“He would do these really interesting renovations,” Bryan said. “There was always something unique in them.” Eventually, the houses Lobo Builders touched developed a signature. People around the area called them “Lobo Homes,” and the nickname carried a specific meaning. Bryan described those homes as artistic, exceptionally solid, with the kind of construction that kept past clients recommending them to others. “Anybody who’s lived in one recommends it to other people,” Bryan added.

They built that reputation house by

house around a philosophy that honors a local landscape far older than anything they could construct upon it. Before drawing plans, they pay attention to topography, movement, and the patterns already written into the property. They listened to what the site was telling them. “We don’t build on the mountain,” Annie said. “We build with it.”

The Lobo team walks a property, studies its topography, and observes how it moves and flows. Wolfe compared any alternative to arriving “like an invasive species,” she said, placing something foreign onto a landscape

rather than allowing the architecture to settle naturally within it. “It doesn’t work when you fight the terrain,” she added. “You have to let the mountain tell you the flow of things.”

That approach is particularly important in Western North Carolina, where a spectacular view often comes with a complicated building site. Bryan, with her Charleston-centric experience, clearly sees the stark contrast between the two environs. Instead of sandy soils, flood zones, and coastal drainage, mountain construction involves dense rock, steep grades, radon, difficult utility access, substantial rainfall, and water moving across sloped terrain.

Western North Carolina is considered a temperate rainforest, making the management of that water especially important. Runoff, drainage, and moisture

within the building envelope become part of the equation alongside more visible architectural decisions. This renovation offered a particularly clear example of how important that groundwork can be.

The home belonged to an older couple, one of whom needed greater accessibility. The challenge became creating a way to navigate the mountainside property without making the home feel as though it had been designed around a limitation. The resulting accessible route follows the house and landscape so naturally that it reads as part of the architecture rather than an accommodation. The renovation’s expansion into the slope allowed the house to meet the steeply wooded site at different elevations. Meanwhile, an added porch that extends into the trees and a substantial mountain-stone chimney give the addition

a material connection to the surrounding landscape.

“The land will give us everything we need if we abide with it instead of going against it,” Annie said. From the woods, the house almost recedes into its surroundings. Dark exterior siding and low, angular rooflines sit organically among the tree trunks, while the stone chimney rises through the canopy with the aesthetic weight and timbre of something that belongs. Mature trees remain immediately around the house, reinforcing Lobo’s idea that the building should adapt to its setting rather than the other way around.

Inside, the renovation reveals the artistic streak Bryan remembered in Thomas’s work years ago. Exposed wood joists and ceiling decking bring warmth overhead, contrasted by black steel beams and other dark architectural elements. In the living room,



Exposed joists and steel beams leave some of the home's construction visible—a fitting detail for builders who care deeply about what lies behind the finishes.

a black-painted brick fireplace surrounds a pale rectangular tile inset and an aged-metal firebox, creating a focal point beneath the raw wood ceiling.

A “Lobo Home,” though, is not shorthand for a particular architectural style. This renovation demonstrates that distinction: its identity comes from allowing the homeowners, the existing structure, and the property to each have a voice in what the house ultimately became.

Even a mountain driveway can become a daily reminder of poor planning, particularly when winter weather turns an overly steep grade into an impossible approach. But those less glamorous considerations are part of what Lobo means by allowing the land to participate in the design.

“You can see the way they graded the driveway,” Bryan pointed out. “Inexperienced builders will make these

very severe, difficult-to-navigate entrances and approaches to a home, and then you're going to end up having to walk up to your house if you get caught in a big snow.”

That attention to the less visible parts of a project reflects another of the Wolfes' broader building philosophies: They build for second and third owners as much as the first. That means paying attention to what happens behind the finishes. Their benchmark is almost archaeological: If someone opens those walls 50 years later, the Wolfes want that person to recognize that their team built it correctly the first time.

On this mountainside, that instinct meant making an existing home more usable for the people living there now without stripping away the idiosyncrasy that makes it theirs. “A construction company is way less about building,” Annie said, “and more

about building solid client relationships.”

For Charlestonians, this project is a reminder that an elevation change comes with a change in the rules. The building experience shifts from sand, flood zones, and coastal drainage to rock, steep grades, mountain rainfall, and an entirely different relationship with the land.

“People are craving peace and nature and quiet,” Annie said. “It's getting harder to find.” Whether that means building something new or finding an existing mountain home worth giving another life, Lobo's advice begins in essentially the same place this renovation did: with what's already there.

For more information, call Lobo Builders at (828) 252-1841 or visit lobobuilders.com.



Annie and Thomas Wolfe of Lobo Builders