Who would think that something so sleek and with such natural, rugged good looks would prefer staying around the house? The zinc wall panel, long seen in the commercial market, is breaking into the residential market as a growing number of homeowners seek a high-end, durable, and attractive metal product for their homes’ exterior.

A case in point is a lakeside vacation home in Marble Falls, TX, situated on a small, wooded peninsula that projects into a lake. The home’s site, a former fish camp, is susceptible to seasonal Texas winds and subsequent damage to structures from surrounding tree canopies. The homeowners chose zinc panel for their 3,000-sq-ft retreat primarily for its durability and low maintenance, says architect Tray Toungate, formerly of Dick Clark Architecture in Austin, TX, who designed the home.

“When it’s affordable, a zinc product has longer term benefits. Think durability and life span beyond 20 years,” said Toungate, who is now principal of Design-trait, an architecture and design firm in Austin, TX. “This home is a well-thought-out piece of construction that is meant to last and be passed on and enjoyed by future generations.

“There was concern from the homeowner about hailstorms, high winds, and trees. In spring and late fall, the central Texas area has unpredictable weather—a big concern for a second home that’s located far away,” he said. “The homeowners wanted something that they could leave for a period of time and not worry about the home’s finish or how it was standing up.”

According to Toungate, the zinc wall panel was also chosen because of its

• self-healing qualities. According to the manufacturer, the metal essentially works to repair itself if scratched or

“When it’s affordable, a zinc product has longer term benefits. Think durability and life span beyond 20 years.”
superficially damaged by trees or water.

- **industrial aesthetics.** Toungate said that the homeowners considered different types of panel but opted for a corrugated panel because of its local influence in central Texas. “Here, corrugated metal is the vernacular,” he said. “The omnipresent, standard corrugated steel—a light-gauge metal panel system—was bypassed for the higher-end zinc.” The zinc panel’s industrial look also gives a nod to the fish camp that once occupied the site.

- **natural hues.** “The homeowners considered galvanized steel but opted for zinc panels because of their long-term benefits and palette of natural colors,” he said. “We were working with raw woods and natural materials. The color palette worked well with the dark greens of the trees and the natural colors of the wood. Because of the neutral, almost dark quality to it, it helped offset and focus your eye on the view. It really fits well with the site, which is kind of hidden within the trees.”

The only challenge with using zinc panels was finding the correct fasteners to use, Toungate said. “It’s not as simple as using steel and attaching a steel screw,” he said. “It’s another layer of making sure that things are specified properly.”

Fortunately, the manufacturer, RHEINZINK® America, Inc., helped Toungate locate and source screws and bolts that would complement the panel and help prevent deterioration. Toungate believes that zinc wall panel will continue to gain popularity among homeowners if the metal remains locally available. “As architects, part of our design process is finding [materials] that are a sustainable option,” he said. “If it is available at a close proximity—where the shipping and lead times are small, and gas and shipping costs are cut down—then it makes it an even more attractive product to use.”

“This home is a well-thought-out piece of construction that is meant to last and be passed on and enjoyed by future generations.”