



a Redesign

THAT PULLS THE FAMILY TOGETHER
AND BRINGS THE OUTSIDE IN

by Marci Riseman & Evan Sagerman

When John and Kim Martinez bought their Monterey Colonial in Kensington, “they could have done anything with it,” says their architect, Gustave Carlson. “But they were interested in, ‘What is this site about?’ and, ‘What is this building about?’”

The home, originally built by architect Walter Radcliff in 1921, sits on three wooded acres with bay views, abutting a pine forest. Kim says, “We wanted to bring as much nature into the house as possible, without compromising the architecture.” They also wanted to make the traditional home a warmer place for their family of five to gather.

“Gustave talked to us about family patterns,” says Kim Martinez. “We like having the kids nearby when we cook and do things.”

To encourage family communication, Carlson redesigned the plan of the house to allow rooms to open up not just to the outside, but to each other. The tight kitchen was enlarged to allow dedicated space for eating and for the kids’ computers. Glass pocket doors were added between the kitchen and dining room to allow either an informal open space or a closed formal space.

The downstairs heart of family life is the glassed-in music and game room off the living room. New interior glass doors from the living room to the music room match exterior glass doors to the garden to reinforce the theme of indoor/outdoor living. “There’s a good balance between feeling like you’re in a solid house,” says Martinez, “and that you could be outside at any time.”







Upstairs, the family gathers on a light-filled landing under the gambrel roof. Once an underutilized closet area, the landing now features a window seat, bookshelves and a view centered on the Golden Gate Bridge. “It’s all the elements of the project, brought down to the scale of one room,” says Carlson. “The kids love hanging out there,” adds Martinez.

Both client and architect share an environmental sensibility, manifested in their choice of materials and finishes. Their Jeld Wen windows came with a rare 20-year warranty, saving on future replacement and lifecycle costs. The palate of muted earth tones -- sage, rust, soft yellow -- is achieved with environmentally friendly low-VOC paints and water-based stains. Carlson specified Forest Stewardship Council-certified mahogany and fast-growing poplar, and cabinets made without particleboard.

“My philosophy of green design is ecological materials, and well-designed spaces, built to last.”

Resources:

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