

Environment For Change

A home remodel guided by green-minded owners is smart and sensational

BY MARY JAMES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY GAIL OWENS



HAVING LIVED IN THEIR
Spanish Ranch-style home

for almost a decade, the owners had a long list of changes in mind when they began to plan an extensive remodel five years ago. Their 1970s-era residence didn't take full advantage of 180-degree views of sparkling water and city lights. Its low ceilings, sunken living room and narrow central hall were dated. And it lacked a pool.

Most important, they vowed any improvements had to be eco-friendly. The hi-tech business executives who have explored many of the world's unspoiled outposts were determined "to bring nature in, to link the inside and outside, to be in balance with the environment."

That philosophy led them to reject an initial plan to raze the

BEFORE



A dated sunken living room and dining room (above) are replaced by a bold new space in the center of an existing residence that welcomes bright light, breezes and grand vistas. Project is the work of Marrokal Design & Remodeling.



structure and build one centered on the estate-size property created with their purchase of two adjacent lots. "That would have been a big waste," says one owner. "We didn't need any more space and we liked the overall layout. It didn't make any sense."

What did make sense was to "surgically remove the middle of the house," the homeowner says. The existing master suite and three-bedroom guest wing would embrace new living and dining rooms open to light, sea breezes and expansive vistas. A 1,200-square-foot indoor pool pavilion would be added to the existing kitchen and family room. All rooms would be updated except for the master and guest baths remodeled earlier.

Design, planning and execution fell to John Mills Davies, director of design, and Steve Walton, design consultant, for Marrokal Design & Remodeling. "They really listened to what we wanted," the homeowner says of the contemporary version of a Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie-style home the Marrokal duo envisioned and constructed over 18 months.

All changes and building materials were guided by the homeowners' mandate to be "as green as possible." Electricity now is generated by the sun, which also helps warm the house. Rainwater is harvested. And smart-home technology ensures maximum energy efficiency.

"It can be done," the homeowner says of their green-driven project. "People have to show other people this is possible. And those people have to show others. It's what has to happen."

Early in discussions with the Marrokal team, the homeowners asked for a design reminiscent of the open, high-ceiling pavilions they enjoyed in Bali. When they backed away from that idea, Davies proposed the Wright-influenced design with its bold horizontal planes and extensive use of wood and stone. Both appealed to the homeowners who love what one calls "God's art," seen in their extensive stone and crystal collection.

The new entry, living room and dining room set the aesthetic and eco-style for the rest of the home. Columns inside the front door frame 180-degree views captured by a new 19-foot tall wall of glass traversed by broad beams of certified sustainable African mahogany. "People never used to stop in this room. They'd just head straight for the kitchen," the homeowner recalls. "Now they linger here."

The same warm wood in a satin finish frames doors and windows and cloaks columns and heavy beams that define rooms in this light-filled space. All this woodwork was handcrafted by Eiji Fuller of Fullerbuilt Fine Carpentry who labored on site for months during the remodel.

The height of this new space created room for a loft above the entry for a new home office, another of the owners' remodel requests. A custom clear-glass and stainless-steel railing continues the open feel while enclosing built-in desks, shelves and a convertible sofa.

Nearby is a stack of eight computers that manage everything from security to climate throughout the house. This sophisticated smart home system that the homeowners can control from anywhere in the world raises and lowers shades and opens and closes windows to maximize active and passive cooling throughout the

house. "We rarely use heat or air conditioning," the homeowner notes.

In the living room, a wall-length anigre-wood cabinet, one of several custom pieces handcrafted by Clyde Turner of CTT Furniture, conceals entertainment equipment, including a 50-inch plasma TV on a hydraulic lift and a whole-house custom music system. A contemporary L-shaped sectional and leather club chairs, all from Room & Board, share space with antiques, fine art, and mementos from the homeowners' travels. Floors here and throughout the house are warmed by intricate hand-knotted rugs collected by the owners on trips to China, Tibet, India and Morocco.

In the dining room, a tall wall of stacked quartzite, the stone picked for floors, column bases and exterior accents, holds two sleek European gas fireplaces. Fronted with ebony glass, they resemble plasma TVs that entertain with a chorus line of dancing orange flames while heating the room on chilly days.

Lighting, a passion of one of the homeowners, is equally dramatic. Cool white "moon" light outside contrasts with warm energy-efficient low-voltage quartz lights inside. Many are concealed, so soft light seems to bathe columns and ceilings magically. "I tell people this is two different houses," one homeowner says, "one during the day and another at night, when everything is aglow."

In the kitchen, family room and new pool pavilion, the indoor-outdoor connection the owners wanted is most pronounced. This open great room also provided the Marrokal team with its greatest challenge.

Davies' pool design, inspired by one seen in Florida, was an immediate hit with his clients except for one detail: Neither wanted the columns at each of the pool's corners needed to support a window-filled cupola 20 feet above. Davies' team responded with plans for a steel moment frame or "cage" that stretched from corners of the room to support the cupola and leave the grand room unobstructed.

Whether standing in the kitchen, with its new tri-level island and gleaming quarter-sawn, book-matched cabinets, or in the family room with its long, low lounges, views to the pool, patio and colorful drought-tolerant garden beckon. (For more on the garden, see page 76.)

Since the remodel was completed, this green-minded home has rewarded its owners with plenty of pleasures beyond lower energy and water bills. On occasion, more than 300 have gathered on the grounds to enjoy the view, a barbecue and music mixed on the in-home DJ system, a hobby of one of the owners. Other times the two of them relax on the patio enjoying morning coffee or a sunset glass of wine.

"When I think about a house, I think about something collected, not purchased, that takes you on a journey to discover new things," the homeowner says. "For me, that journey with its discovery of technologies on the cutting edge is fun." ♦

WHERE TO FIND IT, PAGE 123

More photos follow



Steps of recycled-glass tile link a spa and salt-water, vanishing-edge pool in the new pool pavilion added adjacent to the kitchen and family room.



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The Frank Lloyd Wright-influenced design includes broad beams and columns clad in sustainable African mahogany. A new loft, which seems to float above the entry, houses a new home office.



To make the most of the home's panoramic views, the remodel included the addition of spacious new decks stretching from the master bedroom to the new pool pavilion. An outdoor kitchen (opposite top) is steps away from the remodeled kitchen (opposite bottom) with its new tri-level island and quarter-sawn book-matched cabinets. Rugs here and throughout the home were collected by the owners on their travels.