



A modern family reinvents a split-level ranch

Opening Up *the* Box

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TOP and ABOVE: Overgrown shrubs surrounded the old stoop, and were replaced by a new deck and entrance. Battleship-gray paint was updated with a lighter, sandy shade.

OPPOSITE: An upholstered window seat creates a dining nook in the open kitchen/living room.



A new picture window centers the dining area and overlooks the front yard. The built-in shelves topped by a maple slab create a divider from the front entry.

A run-down split-level might not be the most promising real-estate find, but when Alexis and Kelly Zahoudanis sensed hidden potential, they decided to make an offer. Relocating from Los Angeles to Portland, Oregon, the couple with two young sons liked the new neighborhood, but the house lacked charm. Its problem areas? An outmoded kitchen, a small master bath and "a front stoop of two concrete steps, and small windows dotting the facade," Kelly recalls. But they took a leap of faith and just knew some smart renovation could turn things around in their new, 2,700-square-foot, four-bedroom project.

After searching portfolios online, Alexis and Kelly hired local interior designer Jessica Helgerson, who approached the makeover as a process of removing interior walls and reconfiguring spaces to create clean-lined rooms. Helgerson's architect husband Yianni Doulis also signed on to the project.

Helgerson's environmentally responsible design palette includes sustainably harvested wood, natural-fiber carpeting, antique and vintage furniture, and



ABOVE: Two panels of an existing window and a partition wall in the original living room were removed to create more symmetry as well as space to accommodate the new kitchen and breakfast nook.

organic fabrics, including linen and cotton. She specified nontoxic or low-VOC paints and finishes, and energy-efficient features like a new water heater, dual-glazed windows and improved insulation.

Doulis enhanced the first impression the home would make by installing a new front porch built of ipe wood, and a pergola of cedar certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. A picture window now balances the facade, and frames a nice view from the dining table. Doulis deftly added architectural oomph to the roofline, simply by painting the fascia.

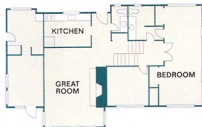
Inside, they removed the enclosed kitchen to create a great-room-style living space. Stretching the width of the house, the kitchen now opens to the combined living and dining areas. "It's one bright and airy space that has a loftlike feeling," Kelly says. Painted wood cabinets and Carrara marble countertops are complemented by stainless steel appliances. There's also a new corner breakfast nook and window seat, and a center island with open shelving for storage and display—all in a black-and-white motif that feels tidy and crisp.

In the adjacent living room, Helgerson removed dry-wall to find a brick fireplace wall. To enhance the open feel, the brick and exposed structural beams overhead were painted white. Chocolate-brown tiles on the hearth



ABOVE: The new kitchen stretches the width of the house and now is part of one great room, which includes the living and dining areas. Dark-stained open shelves provide display and storage beneath a countertop of white Carrara marble. French doors (to the left of breakfast nook) open onto a deck.

FLOOR PLANS: STEVEN SPANIKOWICZ

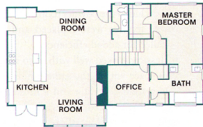


BEFORE

The existing closed-in galley kitchen was cut off from the living spaces by partition walls.

AFTER

Now the great room incorporates the kitchen and the living and dining rooms.





complement ebzonized oak floors. A rocking chaise and a sofa are among Helgerson's vintage furniture finds, and Doulis designed a sculptural coffee table with a top made from a salvaged slab of knotty maple.

Upstairs, the floor plan was reconfigured by moving the master bath from the front to the back of the house. It now overlooks a garden. Saraceno limestone countertops are supported by bathroom cabinets made of a sustainable material engineered from sorghum plants. A spare bedroom adjacent to the new bath was converted to an office. The renovation also included the powder room and the boys' bath downstairs, where fixtures were replaced and dual-flush toilets were installed for added efficiency.

"Jessica worked well with us to simplify the floor plan and gain space within the same building footprint," Kelly says. "On a tight schedule and a limited budget, the makeover created the updated, modern feeling we were after." Updated, modern, and well worth that initial leap of faith. ■

ABOVE: In the renovated powder room, black tile is used as wainscoting beneath a graphic wallpaper print of birds and branches. The countertops are Calacatta marble and the sconce is a custom design.

OPPOSITE ABOVE LEFT: Used as wainscoting around the room and enclosing the lower part of the shower, larger tiles were cut to 3x12 inches for a custom look. The tub surround and countertops are Saraceno limestone. The bath opens onto the home office as well as the master bedroom.

OPPOSITE BELOW: To visually expand the space, the wall behind the bed is painted brown to match linen draperies, hung ceiling to floor. The vintage chest is rosewood.



ABOVE: The existing bath in the master bedroom suite became a walk-in closet, and the bathroom was moved to the other side of house.





An old bedroom became the tidy home office. The painted brick wall is the back side of the fireplace wall in the living room. Ebonized oak floors create a clean, orderly feel.



ABOVE: Decals depicting paper airplanes are used as a whimsical decoration in Jack's bedroom. The 100-percent-wool carpet stands up to wear and tear. Low-VOC paints were used throughout the house.

RIGHT: The Zahoudanis family, from left to right, Jack, Alexis, Peter and Kelly, cozily tuck into the living room's window seat. The cushions are upholstered in a bead-patterned canvas.

what was done

- **REFRESHED** the entrance by replacing overgrown shrubbery and a lackluster front door with a deck and pergola
- **PAINTED** the dingy exterior a soothing sandy hue, replacing the old battleship-gray color
- **ANCHORED** a new open floor plan with the kitchen, and incorporated the living and dining areas
- **CONTRASTED** new colors, textures and finishes, like white cabinets and whitewashed bricks with dark-stained cabinets and wood floors
- **RECONFIGURED** the floor plan upstairs, too, to make original awkward rooms flow together smoothly, cohesively
- **CONSERVED** resources and improved air quality by using sustainably built cabinets, low-VOC paints and stains

