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Point of View

By Susan Todebush | Photos by Martin Vecchio





An Ann Arbor ranch with a '90s addition
is transformed for family living



BEFORE

When Jay and Sarah Finnane decided to make the move from Chicago to Ann Arbor, they quickly realized that the competitive real estate market just didn't offer the perfect home for their young family. Recalling previous visits to the area, they confined their search to the coveted Ann Arbor Hills neighborhood, which is known for its large lots with mature trees, winding roads with a variety of home styles, and proximity to restaurants and shopping.

Once the overall location had been determined, they kept coming back to a 1950s ranch on a lovely lot. While the view from the street was unassuming, a family room that was added in the 1990s offered a soaring ceiling with expansive windows with a view to the garden. Although they knew the home needed work, the family room sealed the deal.

Shortly, plans were underway to renovate the home and add a new master suite. New to town and knowing they would need help finding the sources necessary to complete the project, the Finnanes

ABOVE | The family room was added to the home in the 1990s.

LEFT | Crisp white was used throughout the house, and the dark trim around the windows and doors instantly updates the space and frames the view. Sectional and coffee table: **RJ Thomas**, Suite 82. **Schumacher** (Suite 110) fabric covers the vintage mid-century chairs.





were introduced to interior designer Laura Zender through a mutual friend. Getting Zender involved early in the project allowed her to work with the builder to create a better flow through the original home and incorporate thoughtful details into the new addition.

One big change involved moving the kitchen to the front of the home. The dark tone used in the kitchen over the range was repeated on the door and window trim in the family room to unite the two spaces and to frame the view.

The sloped ceiling and angular light fixture in the kitchen inspired the triangular opening into the mudroom. The move was risky – she knew the family would need to mind the view – so she incorporated plenty of storage and organization to keep things tidy.

All in all, the project took a year to complete. A thorough “refresh” of the home’s basement allowed the family to stay on site during the renovation.

Designers can fill many roles during a large renovation. In addition to selecting colors, materials, and finishes, in some cases, a good designer will also act as “bad cop” with tradespeople, allowing the homeowners to keep a peaceful relationship with those working in the home.



TOP | The marble backsplash tile has worn corners that create a star pattern when laid in a grid pattern, a nod to the home’s mid-century origins. Tile: **Virginia Tile**, Suite 100.

BOTTOM | Plenty of storage was added to the mudroom, keeping the view from the kitchen tidy.

OPPOSITE PAGE | Zender says kitchen design is very personal. Because her clients love to cook, she added lots of wide drawers in place of standard base cabinets. Open shelves add warmth and interest. Tile: **Virginia Tile**, Suite 100.





Acting as editor and stylist, Zender helped the family sort through their furnishings and keep the family's favorites. "Instead of suggesting we buy new art and accessories, she gave us the confidence to hang the art we already had in unexpected ways that look fantastic! It made us love our stuff all over again, and we have a new appreciation for pieces we would have gotten rid of or sold," says Sarah Finnane.

Finnane is delighted with the results. "She (Zender) was able to take my ideas – and countless Pinterest boards – and elevate them into a cohesive design that looks professionally done, but casual and comfortable. Just perfect!"

Zender describes her collaborative style as more guide than guru. "There is never just one 'right' wallpaper, fabric, or tile," she says. "A good designer will learn what the client's style is, narrow down appropriate choices, and lead them to good sources quickly, saving them both time and money."



TOP | A dark green accent wall anchors the Palm Springs-inspired master bedroom. Curtain fabric: Ralph Lauren / **Kravet**, Suite 105.

BOTTOM | In the newly-added master suite, black mirror was applied to the front of the tub to subtly reflect the patterned floor tile. Wall tile: **Virginia Tile**, Suite 100.

OPPOSITE PAGE | The dark fern wallpaper in the hall is a dramatic counter to the light-filled family room beyond. Wallcovering: **Kravet**, Suite 105.