

# huge growth potential

WITH AN APPRECIATION FOR THEIR HOME'S MID-MOD ROOTS AND AN EYE TO THEIR FAMILY'S FUTURE, A MICHIGAN COUPLE PUTS STOCK IN A REMODELING PORTFOLIO FULL OF BOLD CHOICES.



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**PANE PAINT**

Interior designer Laura Zender suggested painting the window trim a deep charcoal color to highlight the views. The dark hue recedes, letting your eyes focus on the scenery outside.

Remodeling is investing. You can play it safe and enjoy modest returns. Or you can take risks and reap big payoffs—that's what Sarah and Jay Finnane did with their 1950s ranch in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"We knew this house would need major work to make it what we knew it could be," Sarah says. "But by that point we had renovated three other homes, so we weren't afraid of a project."

And they had found a sympathetic "broker," interior designer Laura Zender, who shares their tolerance for risk. "I loved their adventurous spirit in creating this home," Zender says. "I was more than happy to take that ride with them."

The ride began when Sarah and Jay spotted the home on their first house-hunting trip to Ann

**LEFT** The family room reflects Sarah and Jay Finnane's love of midcentury modern design, as well as Jay's Southern California roots. **ABOVE** Jay and Sarah met and married in Chicago, then moved to Michigan (her home turf) with Cael and Wren.

WRITER GARY THOMPSON  
PHOTOGRAPHER WERNER STRAUBE

**RIGHT** The kitchen moved to a more central spot right off the family room. From the sink, Sarah can see out to the yard and watch the kids as they come and go. “The kitchen is now the heart of our home and what I’m most proud of on this project,” Sarah says. “The color scheme reflects my favorite combo to this day: black, white and blue. I’d had my eye on blue cabinets for a while.”



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**HOOD WINK**

Sarah and Zender collaborated on a mod design for the range hood, which follows the slope of the ceiling. In a nice nod to the adjoining family room, the hood wears the same dark trim color.



“IT WAS A RISK, BUT I KNEW IF THERE’S ONE TOWN WHERE BLUE CABINETS MAY NEVER BECOME DATED, IT’S ANN ARBOR.”

SARAH FINNANE, HOMEOWNER

Arbor. “The surprise midcentury details kept bringing us back to it,” Sarah says. “It’s an unassuming ranch from the street. You’d never know such a cool space was waiting for you when you come inside.” It reminded Jay of mid-mod homes he grew up around in Southern California. The most potentially lucrative asset was a huge 1990s family room addition with soaring ceilings, walls of windows and underused square footage. “It is really a ‘wow’ moment when you walk into the space,” Zender says. “You cannot see the vaulted ceilings from the street, so it is a spacious surprise.”

The Finnanes made the family room the center of an extensive remodel that updated and reorganized rooms to better fit the lifestyle of their active family. The project included moving and expanding the kitchen, adding a mudroom and a powder room, and creating a primary suite. Along with the sweeping layout changes came brave choices in colors, shapes and patterns.

The decision to go all in on the makeover continues to pay dividends for the couple. “This home fits us and our lifestyle so well and has grown with us as our kids have grown,” Sarah says. “It has a great flow and harmony that I am still very grateful for.”

**LEFT** Kids, a dog (Javy the Havanese) and Michigan winters made the mudroom mandatory. “It’s been a godsend to have a place for both the violin and the field hockey stick,” Sarah says. **TOP** Welcome to the jungle? Palmy wallpaper perks up a hall. “It’s a little unexpected and shows that we don’t take our home—or ourselves—too seriously,” Sarah says.

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**HIDE AND SEE**

The Finnanes turned a side-entry hall into a mudroom, with its cabinetry intentionally invisible from the kitchen side of the pass-through. Slate flooring stands out amid all the alabaster paint.





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**WALL POWER**

Sarah Finnane dithered mightily before deciding on this wild wallpaper for the new powder room. “I wanted it to be vibrant and fun, maybe a little crazy,” she says. Mission accomplished.



**GET THE LOOK**

Hover your phone’s camera for a buying guide to the Finnane home.



A deep emerald wall color sets off the primary bedroom. Vintage bird prints pull in greens and corals from the powder room and hallway wallpaper.

**EXPERT TIPS**

**5 WAYS TO GO BOLD**

READY FOR A LITTLE RISKY BUSINESS? WE ASKED INTERIOR DESIGNER LAURA ZENDER FOR ESCAPE ROUTES FROM THE DECORATING COMFORT ZONE.

**FIND A PAPER BUOY**

Choose wallpaper in a fun and colorful pattern. Zender says a small bath or short hall is a low-risk place to experiment with something lively. “If you’re feeling extra adventurous,” she says, “consider putting wallpaper on a ceiling.”

**UNSATURATE COLORS**

If big swigs of color are too much for you to swallow, try strategic shots or sips. Incorporate a strong hue behind the shelves of a bookcase or on an accent chair, then spread the same color to other spaces in small doses—such as pillows, light fixtures and accessories.

**INDULGE A TRIM WHIM**

Nervous to take the plunge on black trim? Try a softer (but still not white) hue. “Experiment with other colors like taupe, gray, green or blue,” Zender recommends. “These are colors we see outside in nature, so they will blend well with the views.”

**LIGHT MAKES MIGHT**

Go large with lighting. Zender likes how oversize fixtures have an immediate impact when you enter a room. One example: the island pendant in Sarah and Jay Finnane’s kitchen. Its asymmetrical design and mixed metals suit the room’s modern vibe.

**HOW GREAT THOU, ART**

Make a statement with art. “Pick a big bold piece that you absolutely love and display it prominently,” Zender says. Gallery walls are great, but a single large-scale piece will be a good conversation starter for guests, and it can even set the tone for the room’s color palette. **MWL**