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flow chart

A DESIGN TEAM REIMAGINES A HOME TO PROMOTE A SENSE OF CALM AND SUIT A GROWING FAMILY.

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The location was perfect—perched on the shore of picturesque Mercer Island. But the house itself, a contemporary take on a Cape Cod they had lived in for years, simply wasn't functioning for the growing family anymore. "They had three kids who were getting older," says St. Helena, California-based designer Erin Martin. "They wanted a house that would fit them and their lifestyle." Rather than move, the owners decided to reinvent the house, adding square footage and transforming the order and feel of the rooms. "The family is in constant motion," Martin says. "So the house needed to foster tranquility."

The look they went for was casual and coastal, but sophisticated. Almost everything in the house is painted white, but there is no starkness: with a design team comprising Martin, architect Brad Sturman and builder Tom Gallagher, the couple had arched doorways added, ceilings rounded and surfaces softened when possible. The floors, hand-hewn on nearby Bainbridge Island, are a pale white oak with a waxy finish that exudes calm.

Martin scoured Seattle galleries for local art and antiques shops for furnishings, mixing vintage with modern and designer pieces. She also made sure each space incorporated nature's elements. "Every room has glass, stone, metal and wood, representing earth, wind and fire," Martin says. "That makes the house feel like home."

INTERIOR DESIGN Erin Martin, Martin Design
ARCHITECTURE Brad Sturman, Sturman Architects
HOME BUILDER Tom Gallagher, Gallagher Co. LLC
BEDROOMS 5 | BATHROOMS 6 | SQUARE FEET 9,089



Custom shelving in the living room serves as a display for art and antiques that were sourced in the Seattle area; they overlook a custom linen sofa that was acquired through Martin Showroom in St. Helena, California. The fireplace was fabricated by Company K.



Above: Deco-era gates were transformed into doors that cordon off the bar area. In the adjacent dining room, industrial pendants hover over chairs from Sabina Danenberg Atelier in Miami. Left: Sculptures in the dining-to-living-room archway represent the family, which is always in motion.



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But décor was only one facet of the residence's reinvention. Its main obstacle was flow: The family room was a sunken space off the kitchen that felt separated from the rest of the house. The kids' play area was upstairs, next to the master bedroom; that worked fine when they were young, but now that they're teenagers, privacy is more of a concern.

The design team began shuffling the rooms around. They tore down and rebuilt one wing of the house; flipped the kitchen and the family room; and connected the house to the garage, above which they installed guest quarters. The old laundry room became an office off the kitchen; the old office became a bar; and the kitchen now connects to the dining room through a *jali*-inspired wall of ornamental concrete blocks. "We perforated the wall so light goes in and out," Martin says.

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For the kitchen, midcentury chairs by Battersea were changed into barstools by Martin Design and Ray's Custom Iron Works in St. Helena. The extra large Eucalyptus chandelier is by Ochre. Appliances are from Albert Lee Appliance.



To make all three levels of the house flow together, Martin and architect Brad Sturman designed an open metal staircase that encompasses Martin's custom light fixture. Both were executed by Santa Barbara metal artist Mick Handley.

Right: The office features a custom leather-tooled desk; it's hugged by chairs from Thomas Hayes Gallery in Los Angeles. *Below:* The deck, which serves as an outdoor extension of the living room, offers bench seating from Restoration Hardware.





In the newly constructed basement, the design team created a wine room and left the original foundation exposed as an architectural element. The lighted arrow is from Kirk Albert Vintage Furnishings and the door is by Company K.

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The goal was to allow people to travel easily and naturally from one part of the house to another. “There are open spaces, but distinct rooms,” Sturman says. The team added a wraparound deck that spans nearly the length of the house, creating an outdoor extension of the living room. They also added a pool in the newly landscaped garden, which received Seattle landscape architect Brooks Kolb’s guidance for plantings.

The biggest reinvention came below the house, in what had been an unusable shallow crawl space. “The family said, ‘We want to make this into a basement level,’” Sturman recalls. “‘What can you do with it?’”



A pair of Jens Risom Big chairs from Ralph Pucci International, along with a red leather chair and ottoman from Thomas Hayes, sits atop a Moroccan rug from Woven Accents in the family room.



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So the builder excavated tons of soil all around the crawl space, digging out a full 2,400-square-foot floor with a 9-foot ceiling. “We had to shore the house up, install the basement beneath it and waterproof it,” Gallagher says. There, an open rec room was added along with a wine room, an exercise nook and a media room—which Martin furnished in the same casual chic vein; all can be part of one big space or made private by electronically lowering a shade. The home’s three levels are connected by an open staircase, with a custom-fabricated metal light fixture that reaches from the top floor to the basement. “It makes all three levels flow together,” says Martin.

That basement is what allowed the family to stay, as the space became a refuge for the three growing children. “My kids live down there—I never see them,” says the owner, laughing. But because the house is so open now, she says, “I can hear what’s going on if I want to.” **L**

The serene master bedroom in the rebuilt wing has panoramic vistas of the water and land beyond. The capiz shell globe light fixture, acquired through Martin Showroom, adds interest above the neutral bed.