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THE JUST RIGHT HOUSE
AUSTIN, TEXAS



CORE VALUES

An architect's
inventive
family-friendly
additions reflect a
knack for practical
problem solving

PROJECTED AND WRITTEN BY
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OPPOSITE The new wing creates a barrier between the rest of the house and a busy road. The exterior features fiber cement siding and local limestone, accented by a shoji screen-inspired gate that leads to the hard courtyard. THIS PAGE The enclosed courtyard, paved with Arizona flagstone, makes a safe play area for five-year-old Sophia and two-and-a-half-year-old Olivia Antenor.



floor plan

The new addition stretches from the existing ranch house to the back of the lot, terminating with a private deck off the master bedroom. The hard courtyard, green courtyard, patio, and a breezeway form the central core of the renovation and connect the new spaces (which are outlined in black) to the old sections of the house (which are outlined in gray).



Children change everything. Just ask architect Michael Antenora and his wife, Sarah, who had enjoyed the convenience of their well-established Austin, Texas, neighborhood, but found that the small, nondescript ranch house Sarah had purchased in her single days needed expanding as their family grew. Michael devised a strategy that called for updating the existing 1,000-square-foot 1950's-era house and adding a 1,500-square-foot single-story addition.

The house's pie-shaped corner lot, situated at the intersection of a quiet, residential street and a busy thoroughfare, dictated the new layout, which is all about looking inward. The plan reflects the couple's wish list: indoor rooms sheltered from the noisy street, protected outdoor areas for kids to play, and an updated exterior incorporating the Antenoras' modern, eclectic tastes and love of color.

"Our priority was making a safe house and yard for small children," says Michael, whose three girls are five years, two and a half years, and eight months old. For that desired security, the architect designed a new wing, with three family bedrooms



and two bathrooms, along the thoroughfare side of the lot. The addition provides visual as well as acoustic privacy for the rest of the house and yard. "The mass of it creates a buffer against the street noise and activity," Michael explains.

A series of outdoor areas links the old and the new parts of the house and forms the core of the renovation. These spaces include two courtyards, one paved (the "hard" courtyard) and one grass (the "green" one); a patio; and a breezeway. "We wanted to create contained outdoor passageways," says Michael. "You can go from courtyard to courtyard without ever going inside the house."

The concept was put to the test recently at daughter Olivia's second-birthday party, when children covered in cake and ice cream ran in and out of the courtyards while parents observed the activities from the clean, unsticky vantage of the breakfast nook. "My idea of a good party house is one that can accommodate large groups but also has little corners

OPPOSITE The newly expanded kitchen is sleek, with a large, single-pane awning window above the sink; stainless steel appliances; track lighting; and simple, recessed-panel maple cabinetry. **ABOVE** The kitchen connects to a patio via a glazed door on the right, and the new breakfast nook beyond has views to a grassy courtyard and is fitted with sliding doors that lead to a covered breezeway.



ABOVE A breezeway, with two sets of French doors and sliding doors, connects the breakfast nook to an enclosed passageway leading to the bedroom wing. The breezeway has a concrete floor, and fiber cement shingle siding inside and out, which was coated with exterior paint for durability. **OPPOSITE** The house's street-facing side has a low-profile roof and is painted a soft gray-green, but architect (and homeowner) Michael Antenor chose bright colors and an asymmetrical roofline for the section facing the grassy interior courtyard.

where people can get away and have a quiet conversation," Michael says.

Inside the house, the kitchen was bumped out by 2 feet and had its 8-foot ceilings vaulted—to 14 feet at the highest point and 8 at the lowest—to achieve a contemporary look. The room now has enough space for a small, 3½-by-2-foot center island with storage drawers and a built-in undercounter wine cooler.

Michael specified gauged green Vermont slate tile flooring for the kitchen, bathrooms, and other heavy-traffic areas. "The face of the split stone is textured, so it's nonskid," he notes. The material also runs up the walls in the wet rooms for extra protection. Tropical green granite countertops complement the kitchen's

slate floors and backsplash, and a red cast iron apron-front sink spices up the neutral tones of the maple cabinetry.

There's plenty of color on the exterior as well, with vivid red and yellow on the walls facing the green courtyard and a conservative gray-green on those facing the neighborhood. To highlight the home's diversity of exterior forms, Michael varied the siding pattern and color every time the geometry changed. In total, five different patterns skin the house: fiber cement siding in two different horizontal designs, shakes, board-and-batten, and a wide band of limestone on the sides that face the roads.

When an architect has free reign to experiment with designing his own home, the results are always interesting. Working with a tricky site, Michael transformed an average ranch house into a custom home that serves his young family's needs and expresses his creativity. A tree just outside the hard courtyard is both a testament to Michael's pride in the project and a memorial to his late father. "When I built my first house, over a decade ago, my dad gave me \$75 to plant an olive tree, but I didn't think the house was worthy," says Michael. "Well, I think that this house definitely is—and the tree bore fruit in the first year." ■

