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Ahead of the Curve

A little foresight and a lot of style make a twenty-year-old west side home great in 2008

BY KATIE VAUGHN

FEW HOUSES DESIGNED, built and decorated in the 1980s can claim to be contemporary by today's standards. Yet that's exactly the case in the home of Allen and Ruth Zacharias.

The couple's smart planning two decades ago—which included features that are hot home trends now—coupled with a recent kitchen remodel set the west-side house firmly in the twenty-first century.

After discovering wooded lots tucked off a busy Madison thoroughfare were for sale, Allen and Ruth built a contemporary-style home in 1989, working with Ed Linville of Linville Architects and Joe Krupp of Krupp General Contractors. >>







The house is close to all the amenities of city life, as well as RZ & Company, the salon they own. But when they're home, the Zachariases feel miles away from all the bustle, completely surrounded by trees and nature. And that's the way they prefer the situation.

"We're hidden," Ruth says.

"That's the beauty of it," Allen adds.

As they were already empty-nesters, the couple designed the house just for the two of them—plus their friendly, fluffy Samoyed named Kasha.

They planned the spaces based on the rooms they did and didn't use in their previous home. For the Zachariases, that meant a large great room instead of separate family and living spaces, rooms that aren't closed off from one another, and a spacious master suite.

"These are the rooms that we use," Allen explains. "And there's an easy flow from room to room."

"We literally use the whole house," Ruth says.

Other wise moves—choices readily incorporated in many of today's new homes—include a screened-in porch, a preponderance of windows, a walk-in closet with an attached cedar closet, a laundry room placed between bedrooms,



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PERSONAL STYLE:

From top: A bedroom reading nook; the open great room; a hallway library. Opposite page: Bold-hued walls liven up the dining room.



and a luxurious master bathroom with a double shower and double vanity.

Nevertheless, by 2006 the Zachariases were ready to make some updates to their house, particularly in the kitchen. They looked to Laurel McManus Brown of Brownhouse Architecture and Interior Design, who had designed their salon when it moved to Odana Road from Midvale Boulevard in 2005.

A priority for the couple was creating a cooking and eating space that blended effortlessly with the rest of the house. “I

FAVORITE PLACES:

Above: Kasha enjoys the great room. *Left:* The creatively styled kitchen is one of the spaces Allen and Ruth use most.

really wanted the kitchen to not really look like a kitchen when you look at it," Ruth says.

Working with Bella Domicile—the company that had designed their original kitchen in '89—they replaced painted white cabinets with a two-toned cabinetry system featuring darker wood on the bottom and lighter wood up top. And enlarged countertops, including a curving island and row of chairs chosen by Brown, eliminated the need for a kitchen table in the room.

"The only time we miss it is when we have friends over to play cards," Ruth says with a laugh.

The kitchen opens directly into the great room, with bold yellow hanging lights from Brownhouse signaling the changing of spaces.

"It's a nice accent to separate the two rooms," Allen says.

For dinner parties, the Zachariases and guests head to the formal dining room, which they painted a fiery red when they remodeled. The bold hue sets off the colorful artwork, glossy black chairs and geometric glass table—many of which were made for them by friends.

The couple showcase other prized possessions in cabinetry they added around

the great room and in the house's spacious entryway. Art glass is among the couple's favorite collectibles, as are items given to them by family members. Art found in their world travels also grace walls and shelves. And the couple has found furniture pieces in global styles, such as a red Asian cabinet Ruth and Allen placed near the front door.

One particularly beloved—and quirky—collection fills a wall in the kitchen. As a child, Ruth told her mother she wanted to start a collection. Her mother suggested keys, having no idea it would ignite a minor obsession that's had the Zachariases searching for interesting varieties of the tiny objects everywhere they go. They've found keys in odd shapes and sizes and a variety of colors. Antique keys hang alongside a few the couple found in China. There's even a Playboy key in the mix.

In decorating the entirety of their home, the Zachariases played with color and texture. Ten different paint colors—including purple in the kitchen and red in the dining room—brighten walls, while a



A CLOSER LOOK:

Above: Ruth's key collection is showcased on a kitchen wall. Left: The couple's love of color extends to their dishes and napkins.

DETAILS, DETAILS:

A curving island, a grid-patterned ceiling and funky hanging lights add personality to the kitchen.



PHOTOGRAPH BY AMY LYNN SCHERCK



light foil wallpaper imparts subtle sheen to the downstairs bathroom. In the master bedroom, natural-hued textured grasscloth wallpaper and wooden blinds create a warm, earthy atmosphere.

"This has just given the room a whole new dimension of warmth," Allen says.

Another bonus of the bedroom is a nook the Zachariases have designated as a reading area. Comfy blue overstuffed chairs nestled by a line of windows make for an inviting corner to curl up in with a book. And a collection of reading materials isn't far away: The couple turned a light-filled hallway outside their bedroom into a mini library, stocking wooden shelves with tomes and art objects.

Ruth says she and Allen have no intention of leaving their home, save for some more traveling. They want to spend the rest of their lives here. Given this goal, their personalized approach to design and remodeling was especially insightful.

"We built the house for us," Allen says.

Katie Vaughn is associate editor of *Madison Magazine*.