

# Family Style

*An ambitious College Hill remodel offers a Eugene family plenty of room to grow in living spaces with modern flair and sweeping views.*

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At first glance, Tyler and Tera James' College Hill home looks modest, with the same basic outlines and proportions as when it was built in the 1940s. But look closer, and there are subtle hints — like the translucent garage door and a mix of painted cedar siding with horizontal slats of tropical wood — that this mid-century family home is ready for a new generation.



Beyond the expanded entry, which is the home's only new square footage, awaits a warm, open floor plan with naturally finished wood and impressive window views. It's all in a sleek, modern style: angled beams, graphic charcoal tiles at the entry and fireplace, stainless steel and glass in the kitchen. Conspicuously absent is clutter, despite the presence of three boys ages 6, 9 and 12. With 4,000 square feet of redesigned space, there's clearly a place for everything.

The James family was living in a Ferry Street Bridge-area Craftsman-style home when they found the house they hoped would better fit their needs, primarily a location near their boys' school, room enough for everyone, and a lot big enough for a future in-laws' cottage. The sweeping views were another big plus, but there also were minuses.

“We bought the house knowing it would require a major renovation,” says Tera James.



“It was hard to imagine how to fix it, with its low ceilings and chopped-up floor plan. It had been added on to poorly and just needed reworking in so many places. It had lost whatever original style it had.”

Enter Richard Shugar, principal of 2fORM Architecture in Eugene. The Jameses wanted their new house to function well for their family and to reflect a contemporary, yet timeless, style. When they brought Shugar to the house, he immediately saw the possibilities.

### **Right place, wrong time**

While Shugar worked on preliminary ideas, the Jameses spent evenings and weekends taking the house down to its shell. Meanwhile, they put their current home on the market, anticipating a quick sale to finance the renovation. Tearing into walls was sometimes stressful as new problems were exposed, says Tera James, adding that Shugar would quickly find solutions.



But the real stress came when the market downturn hit and the sale of their other house fell through. With no money to finance the remodel and the new house now uninhabitable and unsellable, they were stuck. Work stopped while the couple regrouped. They put their Ferry Street Bridge house back on the market and waited for better economic news.

“We had a grand plan. That was important to keep in mind — that it was going to happen for us, but not in a year,” says Tyler.

Eventually they sold their house, accepting a lower price, and turned back to their remodel. Finances continued to be an issue for the project, simply because of its scale. But Tera and Tyler credit Shugar for finding inexpensive solutions to meet the style and function of the new space.

### **Opening up the possibilities**

To showcase the views, Shugar vaulted the living room ceiling toward the east, adding a wall-size sliding door for deck access. He used transom windows to capture more light.

In the new kitchen/dining room — the center of James family life — Shugar vaulted the ceiling into an unused attic to gain headroom and light. A new master suite with a built-in bed designed by Shugar also has deck access and large windows to capture the view.

Stairs at each end of the house drop to first-floor rooms built below street grade. The sunken first floor, which opens to the backyard, also was reconfigured to optimize headroom. Three existing bedrooms were altered slightly to provide better storage or access, and their high, narrow windows replaced. The two existing baths were updated to reflect the home's new style, and a new TV room, office, laundry and family room round out the space.



“This was my favorite remodel project, because the owners gave me their trust,” Shugar says.

That trust included the extra expense of wood windows. “We had to cut back in other areas,” says Tyler. Savings included using ready-made IKEA cabinets for the kitchen and other areas, and resurfacing, rather than replacing, dated bath tile. Shugar also helped the couple reduce their appliances price tag from \$16,000 to \$6,000 by finding comparable models, and found solid quartz countertop remnants for next to nothing.

Keeping to their budget was challenging given the size of the job. Doing a lot of the work themselves with help from Tyler's father helped. And while there were many times when it seemed the project was too ambitious to pull off, 14 months later the James' deceptively modest-looking place is just what they were looking for in a “new” house.

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