

Marin Home

FROM TOURS AND MAKEOVERS TO DECORATIVE DETAILS AND REALTOR INSIGHTS

The home's two-way fireplace can be enjoyed while sitting inside or outside.

NEW DIGS

Moving to a new neighborhood is easier for a family when they can shape the house while it's going up. »

BY DAWN MARGOLIS DENBERG • PHOTOS BY LIZ DALY





MILL VALLEY RESIDENT Audra Weiss is quick to admit she and husband Jim weren't the type of clients real estate professionals covet. "We were perpetual lookers and could never pull the trigger on anything," she admits.

At one of countless open houses they attended, the Weisses met realtor Joshua Deitch of Coldwell Banker, who mentioned a house not yet on the market they might like. But, he cautioned, this was a spec house and the project wasn't far enough along to get a sense of things. They kept in touch.

Several months later, the phone rang and Audra and Jim went to see this work in progress. "The space was still quite raw," Audra says. But they saw potential. Lots of potential.

Of particular interest: the home's design was focused on blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces. "The Nana doors weren't in yet, but the home was framed out and you could just see how nicely it would all flow," Audra says. Another plus: their kids

wouldn't have to share a bathroom, an issue that had sparked sibling squabbling.

So at long last, the Weisses made an offer, purchasing a four-bedroom, five-bath home in the Horse Hill neighborhood of Mill Valley. Because construction was still in the early stages, they were able to choose all their own finishes and tweak the design. One room, originally slated to be divided into a bedroom and small study, was made into a kids' media space and a main-floor bathroom became en suite.

They also decided on small changes to the kitchen. And an area the architect had envisioned as a TV room became a home office; the TV was then positioned on the wall above the great room's two-way fireplace.

While the Weisses were no strangers to home construction, the scope of this project was overwhelming. Fortunately, Audra put her faith in Mill Valley-based interior designer Jennifer Messina, who helped them choose everything from paint to pillows. For the kids' media room, Messina suggested simple PB Teen sofas, a West Elm media console and a

modular rug by Flor. The enormous chandelier above the stairwell is Restoration Hardware. "It was not an easy job to hang it," says Audra.

Nine months after closing, the family moved in. And while the inside was more or less done, the outside not so much: "it was a giant mud pit," Audra confides. But the couple had big plans, including adding a large swimming pool and patio and an expansive pergola, which now lets in light but keeps the area temperate during the day. Mounted heat lamps maintain a toasty temperature after sundown.

The transition from old home to new wasn't without challenges. "It was hardest on my son, who was leaving behind a tight group of neighborhood buddies," Audra says. But a year later the entire brood, including the family dog, are loving their new digs. "A few months back," Audra says, "I checked in with my son about how he was adjusting, and he said, 'It feels like we've never lived anywhere else.'" **M**

For column consideration, please send photos and a description to dawn@marinmagazine.com.



Opposite: The home feels like a resort. This page, clockwise from top left: The large chandelier is from Restoration Hardware; the Weiss family; a kitchen replete with all the bells and whistles; the spacious family room.



THE DETAILS

WHERE THEY PURCHASED The Horse Hill neighborhood of Mill Valley

WHAT THEY BOUGHT A four-bedroom, five-bath modern farmhouse

SELLING AGENT Scott Woods of Pacific Union International

LISTING AGENT Joshua Deitch of Coldwell Banker

THE STATS Average price per square foot for similar homes in the neighborhood: \$975