



Silver Linings

When wildfires strike,
a design team pivots and
a serene family retreat is born.

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he owners of this Sonoma County compound—composed of the primary residence, a guesthouse and a garage with sleeping quarters above—know that even the best-laid plans can sometimes go sideways.

“When we purchased the

property, we considered it a long-term project. But we also thought we could do some light-touch upgrades in the main house and have it become move-in ready,” the wife says. “Looking at all that happened and where we are now, I’m laughing.”

That’s because those “light-touch” upgrades became a full renovation engineered by residential designer Chris Cahill and designer Regan Baker, transforming the primary dwelling—constructed in 1977 with small rooms and a steeply pitched roof—into an open, light-filled getaway dressed in a refreshing palette of whites, grays and blues, and punctuated with black accents. Just off the expanded living room, a new wrap-around porch overlooks a small vineyard and offers views of a conifer forest and the Mayacamas Mountains. Although the setting is peaceful today, its creation story is rather dramatic.

Initially, work began away from the main structure, with remodel efforts focused on the original guesthouse by the pool, a place the growing family hoped friends and relatives would stay during extended visits. But those plans were abandoned when wildfires swept through the region, destroying the building just as renovations were about to begin. The action caused the owners to pivot, abandoning their initial plans. “We decided to focus on the main house instead,” says the wife.

Although the primary dwelling was untouched by flames, the design team, working with general contractors Jon L. Curry and Erio Brown, decided to change its nature, using fire-retardant materials in the process. “We stripped it down to the studs,” Cahill says. First, they expanded and opened the main floor by incorporating the existing garage into the living space, making way for a new entry hall, office and guest suite. Relocating the staircase behind the dining room fireplace allowed for an expansive, open-plan living and dining area. Upstairs, above what was once the garage, Cahill designed an addition housing the children’s room,

making a loft-like space by adding a new dormer to match the ones already in place. The team also rebuilt the guesthouse, plus a new garage with a guest unit above, and unified all three buildings with gray siding that puts a modern twist on traditional board and batten.

The homeowners hired Baker after admiring her family-friendly work for mutual friends. “They really wanted a comfortable yet elevated style,” says the designer, who created a family-first look that’s also appropriate for hosting guests. “For example, there’s no television in the living room or anywhere downstairs,” she says. “It’s more about entertaining with adults on the first level, and then the upstairs is dedicated to kids.”

The husband and wife both love design and are decisive and informed about the subject, which made the project collaborative, with Baker presenting schemes, such as dark versus light, to help the two narrow their direction. “My husband skews more modern and stark, and likes pops of bright color,” says the wife. “I gravitate toward old-world detail, vintage items, found objects—rich textures with an eclectic feel.” While working with Baker on a plan, she says, “We met somewhere in the middle.”

Baker appointed the house with clean-lined furniture in neutrals and shades of blue, mixing in some of the wife’s collected pieces and accenting it all with black metal in bases, hardware and lighting. Touches of aqua and teal provide notes of color, as seen in some of the kitchen’s cookware and bowls, which are displayed on open shelves. Upstairs in the main bedroom, the headboard wall is covered in a high-contrast teal grass cloth “to draw your eye up,” notes the designer. “We used color to highlight the gabled ceiling.” Baker also brought warmth to the primarily white palette with wooden pieces such as the vintage console in the living room and an antique pharmacy cabinet in the entry. “The tonal palette keeps things about the view,” she says.

Looking back, the owners are glad they focused on the main house first. For them, a sudden change in direction led them to exactly the right place. “Had we followed our original plan, we wouldn’t have done it this way,” notes the wife. “It’s really an amazing and special home.” ■



In the new entry for this Sonoma County estate, designer Regan Baker layered in soft textures with herringbone floors, Elworthy Studio wallpaper from Grey Lux Lines and an antique wooden pharmacy cabinet. The iron-and-glass light fixture by Ian K. Fowler for Visual Comfort adds contrast.



In the living room, artfully unmatched sofas extend a casual, comfortable invitation. Both by Cisco Home, they're covered in neutral, durable Perennials fabrics with young children in mind. Rustic pieces such as the coffee table by BD Studio for Burke Decor and the wooden McGee & Co. side table reference the landscape seen through the window.



Above: The kitchen features white Shaker cabinetry by Mike's Custom Cabinets, and brass accents like the Rejuvenation drawer pulls and the Cedar and Moss sconce add warmth. The island is topped with Laneve Nuovo, an engineered quartz by Vadara Quartz.

Opposite: High-contrast pieces like the dining chairs by BD Studio for Burke Decor bring texture to the dining area, while the modern, eight-tier light fixture with hand-blown glass orbs by Lumifer lends an industrial note. The artwork on the mantel above the fireplace by Bay Area artist Richard Laing is from Super Simple.



Above: A series of 20th-century-style library sconces in an aged steel finish from RH continues a theme of industrial touches in the lighting. Balancing the metal accents are warm wood shelving and a walnut armchair with wool-and-linen cushions by Sobu.

Opposite: In the family room, cabinets by Mike's Custom Cabinets are coated in Benjamin Moore's Mountain Mist and provide storage for the kids' games and electronics. Side tables by Noir are paired with a Cisco Home sectional covered in a Perennials fabric. The flag is the clients' own and provides the perfect graphic accent.



Above: Soft and serene—and occasionally punchy—blue-greens and grays thread throughout the residence to the main bedroom, where an east-facing balcony welcomes morning light. The clients' chair is accented by a midcentury-inspired floor lamp by Aerin for Visual Comfort.

Opposite: A canopy bed with a fabric headboard by RH takes advantage of the bedroom's tall ceilings. Teal grass cloth by Phillip Jeffries also highlights the architecture while referencing other pops of the hue around the room. The linen duvet cover and the honeycomb chandelier are from Serena & Lily, and lamps from Jayson Home top the bedside tables from Design Within Reach.

