

A weekly guide to home, garden and real estate news, edited by Elizabeth Lorenz

## Home Front

**SHOP AT SCHOOL ...** Glass snow people, reindeer, ornaments, cups, bowls, candy canes and more decor made by students, faculty and alumni in Palo Alto High School's Fiery Arts (glass blowing) program will be for sale Friday and Saturday. Sales will benefit the Fiery Arts program. Live demonstrations and free cookies and hot cider will be served. The sale will be **Friday, Dec. 14** from 3-6 p.m. and **Saturday, Dec. 15** from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. inside the Paly Tower Building, 50 Embarcadero Road, in Palo Alto. For more information go to [facebook.com/PalyFieryArts](https://facebook.com/PalyFieryArts).

### PANTONE COLOR FOR 2019

... The word is out: Pantone Color Institute has picked its 2019 Color of the Year: **PANTONE 16-1546 Living Coral** is "vibrant yet mellow," and "embraces us with warmth and nourishment to provide comfort and buoyancy in our continually shifting environment," Pantone's website states. For 20 years, the institute has selected a Color of the Year, which has influenced product development and purchasing decisions in multiple industries. To arrive at the selection each year, Pantone's color experts comb the world looking for new color influences. This year, experts said they were seeking "authentic and immersive experiences that enable connection and intimacy" in today's world of digital technology and social media. "The engaging nature" of Living Coral "welcomes and encourages lighthearted activity." The color (a sort of pinkish orange) is a "nurturing" one that "appears in our natural surroundings," according to Pantone.

### HOLIDAY GARDEN DECOR ...

It's possible you may already have a garden full of things you can use to decorate your home for the holidays. According to Jenny Andrew of **Garden Design** magazine, classic boxwood shrubs, holly, paperwhites, evergreen (branches and cones), as well as amaryllis, make great holiday centerpieces or decor.

*Send notices of news and events related to real estate, interior design, home improvement and gardening to Home Front, Palo Alto Weekly, P.O. Box 1610, Palo Alto, CA 94302, or email [elorenz@paweb.com](mailto:elorenz@paweb.com). Deadline is one week before publication.*

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Above: Architect Helena Barrios Vincent raised the living room ceiling to 12 feet and added sliding-glass doors to Lynn and Joe Felter's Midtown home. Top right: The kitchen was remodeled but plumbing fixtures were not moved. See online slideshow at [PaloAltoOnline.com](https://PaloAltoOnline.com).



The yard (with its reclaimed bathtub, foreground) can be seen from most parts of the home.

## Adding light and height

Transforming a long-term rental into a family home

Story by Carol Blitzer | Photos by Veronica Weber

Lynn and Joe Felter didn't really mind that the midcentury modern home they rented in 2010 was what she called "quite a dump." They were only planning to stay there with their three sons for under a year.

But while Joe was deployed to Afghanistan, the Midtown Palo Alto house suddenly came on the market. Lynn jumped to buy it.

"Joe hated this house. We didn't think we had the money to remodel, so we did cheap remodels," Lynn said.

Eight years later, they were settled in the community and decided to make that "dump" into a real home.

Palo Alto architect Helena Barrios Vincent helped the Felters zero in on what was working and what was not.

"Before, we had gigantic furniture (collected in Asia) that filled a small space," Lynn said. "(Vincent) designed a space that profoundly changed the way our family interacts with one another.

"We never used to sit in the living room because it was not comfortable. Now we sit and talk to each other, which is lovely with three teenagers."

Vincent began by raising the ceiling in the living room to 12 feet, then adding Fleetwood stacking sliding-glass doors leading outside, where all can enjoy the view of a giant redwood.

Then she designed a master-bedroom suite, with angled 10-foot ceilings and large windows overlooking the backyard.

Today the suite is entered through a wide walkway lined with an interior-lit closet. To the left is the master bath with a modern freestanding tub next to windows overlooking the landscape. (The first tub arrived cracked, but it was quickly reinvented as an outdoor planter with streaming succulents.) An accent wall behind the tub was created from recycled wood; a second wall has a niche for shampoo and soap.

A square vessel sink sits atop a white Caesarstone counter, all over a zebra wood vanity. The

square shower has two glass walls, frosted about two-thirds of the way up for privacy.

The bedroom itself is awash in light from windows facing the roomy backyard. The hot tub was moved over to be close to the master bedroom. A large sofa, made from recycled teak flooring that used to be inside, now sits outdoors. Throughout the house, the floors were upgraded to multi-toned acacia wood and baseboard radiant heating was added.

With a high-ceiling living room and new master-bedroom suite, the old kitchen became the next target for remodeling.

"We went a little over budget," Lynn said. "We added one more bathroom. Then we added the kitchen and heating halfway through."

The costs for the kitchen were kept in check by not moving any of the plumbing, Vincent said.

"The old cabinets didn't open and close," Lynn said, so they changed them out for white melamine-coated cabinets from IKEA. "The price difference is phenomenal. IKEA's come a long way (in terms of quality)," Vincent said.

To take advantage of the view and light, she minimized the walls separating the kitchen from the living/dining room areas. One wall was kept near the stove, leaving plenty of space for a large Asian cabinet in the living room.

Vincent pushed out the exterior wall two feet, just under the eaves. "It made a huge difference" in how the space worked, she said.

A walnut butcher-block counter complements the white Caesarstone counter along one wall. In the middle is an IKEA freestanding island, topped by white-stained bamboo, "so it wouldn't compete with our beautiful walnut," Vincent said.

The backsplash, what Vincent called "a little splurge," is Heath tile. "I tell my clients to focus on one thing, like windows or doors (or tile), that's worth spending more."

Even with the tile, the kitchen remodel only added about \$15,000.

By switching to a tankless water heater, the Felters captured the space where the tank water heater previously lived and use it as a linen closet.

The outside was impacted as well.

"It was pretty bleak, boring, with no windows (to break up the walls)," Vincent said. "We re-did the driveway and added little accents with stained black cedar."

While her husband was away for much of the construction (he works in Washington, D.C., coming home every three weeks), Lynn made all the construction decisions. She's very pleased with the end result.

"The joy I feel walking from the new bedroom to my office: so much light, high ceilings," she said. ■

Freelance writer Carol Blitzer can be emailed at [carolblitzer@gmail.com](mailto:carolblitzer@gmail.com).

## RESOURCES

**Architect:** Helena Barrios Vincent, Palo Alto, 650-996-3669, [hbvarchitecture.com](https://hbvarchitecture.com)

**Contractor:** David Liguori, 2nd Generation Development, San Carlos, 650-596-0683, [2ndgenerationdevelopment.com](https://2ndgenerationdevelopment.com)

**Interior Design:** Sheri Tye, 650-996-3669, [hbvarchitecture.com](https://hbvarchitecture.com)

**Landscape Design:** Ira Livneh, birch tree gardens, Palo Alto, 650-704-4896, [birchtreegardens.com](https://birchtreegardens.com)

**Structural engineer:** Humza Chowdhry, Jamie Green, HC Structural Engineering, San Mateo, 650-557-4333, [hcseonline.com](https://hcseonline.com)

**Goal of project:** Add master-bedroom suite, raise ceilings, modernize kitchen

**Year house built:** mid-1950s

**Size of home, lot:** 1,712 sf (includes garage) plus 472 sf addition on 7,746 sf lot

**Time to complete:** Eight months of construction

**Budget:** About \$300,000