

Houzz Tour: Updating an Eichler While Preserving Its Spirit

Architects and builders keep this home's integrity intact while remodeling the kitchen, creating a master suite and adding energy efficiency



Becky Harris

Houzz Contributor. Hi there! I live in a 1940s cottage in Atlanta that I'll describe as "collected." I got into design via Landscape Architecture, which I studied at the University of Virginia.

This Northern California couple knew they wanted to live in an Eichler house and waited until they could get into the right one, even staying in a friend's basement for months while the short sale went through. So they had the patience to take a few more years to live in it and find out what they wanted from the house and what the house wanted to be.

Built in 1964, their home was well-preserved and hadn't undergone any renovations that altered its integrity. Working with architects and builders well-versed in Eichler homes, they created a master plan that kept their update cohesive, suitable for modern life and more energy efficient. Most important, they were able to maintain the integrity of the original design.



Photos by Mariko Reed

Houzz at a Glance

Who lives here: A couple

Location: San Francisco Bay Area

Size: 1,920 square feet (178 square meters) plus garage; two bedrooms (and two offices that could be bedrooms), two bathrooms

Architect: Dennis Budd of Gast Architects

Year built: 1964; renovations completed in 2014

The couple's first home was a Craftsman cottage, but they developed a love of midcentury modern design soon after they moved in. This had them scouting for an Eichler for quite some time. This one is in a neighborhood that their architect, Dennis Budd, estimates is about 90 percent Eichlers. The neighborhood is one of the last built before the company went out of business.

Outside, they didn't change much or expand the envelope. They simply freshened the paint, cleared overgrown plants, replaced the reeded glass windows with a close aesthetic match that was more efficient, and added new lighting and house numbers. They also modified the leaking roof a bit. "Eichlers often didn't have much insulation; the only place to add it is through the roof," Budd says. They installed a foam roof, and raised the fascia to add insulation and improve energy efficiency. The homeowners hope to put in solar power in a future renovation phase.

[Learn more about Joseph Eichler](#)



Photos by Mariko Reed

The alternative for insulating these kinds of roofs is dropping interior ceilings, which would've meant losing the original signature tongue-and-groove planks and beams that are an important part of the design. In this renovation, the beams and ceilings are original.

The kitchen renovation was one of the largest and most important parts of the project. Changes to the layout included extending and adding height to the original 32-inch-high island, replacing the original appliances, and filling in a small corridor with the pantry-refrigerator wall (see "before" and "after" plans below).

Over the induction stove is a vent hood in the ceiling. Budd didn't want to chop up the space with a vent that hung down and obstructed the view. In fact, originally he had the range and the sink flip-flopped from where they stand today, but keeping them where the existing plumbing and gas lines were was a smarter decision. Moving them would've meant messing with the original 1960s hydronic heating tubes in the floors, which would've been tricky.



Photos by Mariko Reed

The bright yellow backsplash tile is from Heath Ceramics, an iconic California company. It lends lovely texture and color befitting the room's midcentury style. The homeowners wanted to keep the design's simplicity. The tile adds subtle variations in color and a handmade element.

🕒 Before Photo



BEFORE: Here's a look at the original kitchen. The couple lived with it for several years in order to figure out what they needed to change and what would keep its spirit alive.



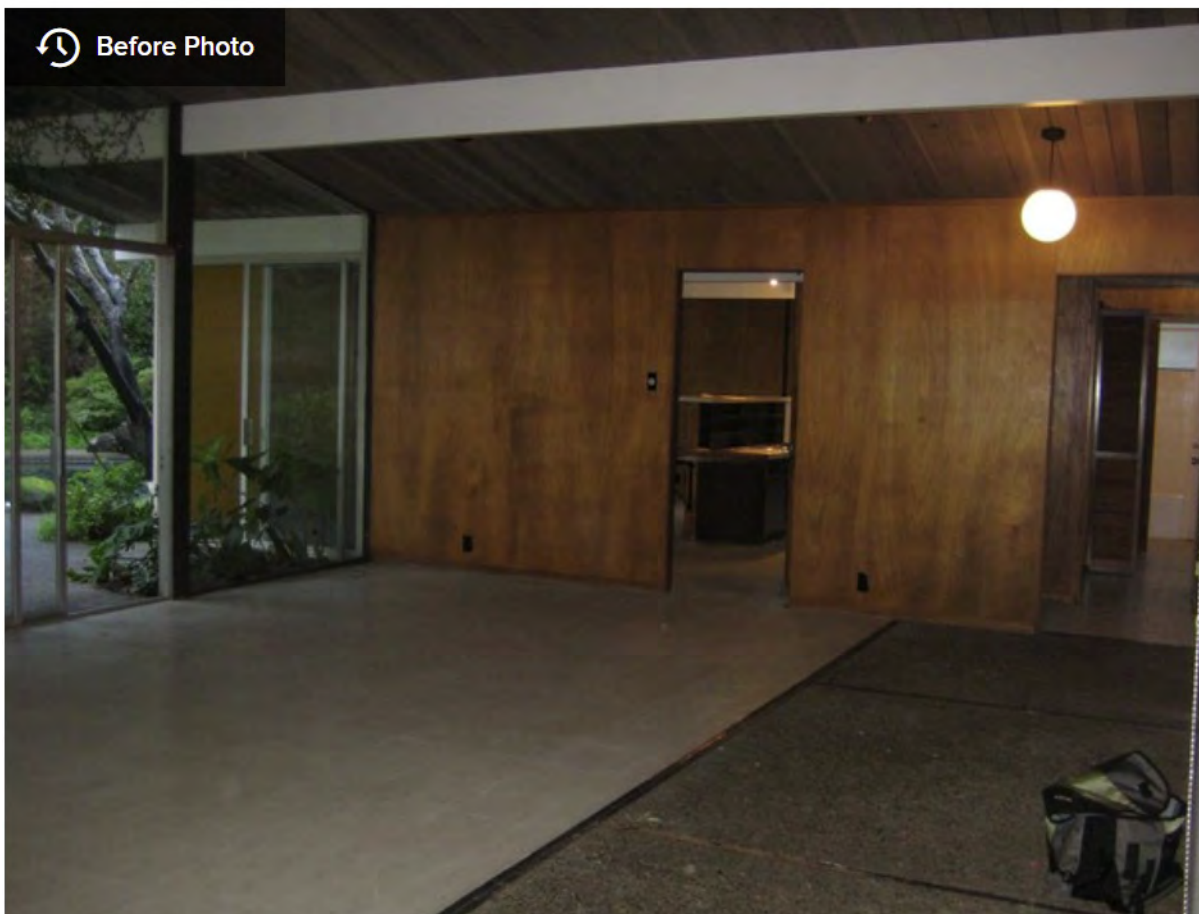
Photos by Mariko Reed

One of the important elements they wanted to keep was the original 10-foot sheets of mahogany paneling. “The mahogany is in great shape — it’s been lightened by the sun, but it has a wonderful patina,” Budd says. The homeowners worked hard to save this paneling since they loved the imperfections that show the history of the home as well as the look of the 10-foot sheets, which are no longer available. They peeled the panels off the walls, lightly sanded them with steel wool and 300-grit sandpaper, and finished them with a wax stain.

The new island has extensive storage on both sides and a seating area. It also hides the dishwasher and trash/recycling bins on the kitchen side.

After a beloved neighbor passed away, they bought their first piece of modern furniture, one of these dining chairs, at his estate sale. Once they began renovating the kitchen, they realized that a set of the 1960s Danish modern teak chairs would be just right for the space. Once they realized that the chairs would cost thousands of dollars in the U.S, they kicked off an international search. Savvy at scouring European eBay sites for motorcycle parts, one of the homeowners used the same strategy for the chairs. He found one matching group from a seller in Luxembourg and another in Denmark, for a total of 11 vintage chairs that are exactly alike.

Parsons table: custom size, Room and Board; 1960s Glyngøre Stolefabrik chairs: eBay



Taking the time to create a cohesive master plan that would make the home flow was a priority for the homeowners. Although they knew they would likely have to renovate in phases, they didn't want to do the rooms piecemeal without a clear idea of the big picture.

BEFORE: Originally, the living room was closed off from the kitchen-dining area. Now that the kitchen flows so beautifully with the rest of the house, keeping it hidden seemed a shame.



Photos by Mariko Reed

In the living room, they removed a wall that stood between the center column and the exterior wall to create a better flow to the kitchen and a more open feeling. Although the homeowners stayed true to the spirit of the home, they didn't hold back on infusing it with their personal style. They found the carved Indonesian piece in Sonoma, California, and lovingly call it their "dragon."

Like many Eichlers, the home has original hydronic heated floors. This means that the structural concrete floor also serves as the finished floor. All that was required to get these floors in shape was polishing and sealing.



BEFORE: The original pool and concrete aggregate surrounding it were in good shape, but the yard was overgrown. The homeowners loved the simplicity of the landscape and cleared out what was necessary to create a more functional outdoor space.



Photos by Mariko Reed

The homeowners couldn't say enough about the builders at Paris Construction Service, who have worked in the neighborhood for years and renovated more than 50 Eichler homes. They specialize in the intricacies and oddities involved in renovating Eichlers and brought great experience to the table. The builders treated any requests to keep something funky or try something tricky as satisfying new challenges.



Photos by Mariko Reed

Budd had helped the couple renovate a previous home, so they knew what they would need to survive living on the property during renovations — a separate space away from the noise, dust and constant stream of people coming through the house. The couple stayed in this 9-by-10-foot cabana during the renovations, and one of the homeowners, who works from home full time, also used it as an office during that period. Now it serves as a cabana for the pool. Their niece and nephew have dubbed the cabana “The Chipmunk House,” and it’s their favorite place to sleep when they visit. A fire pit out here is the next item on the homeowners’ wish list.



Photos by Mariko Reed

The home has two separate bedroom wings. In this one, two bedrooms originally shared a hall bath. In reconfiguring the plan, Budd borrowed space from the hallway, the master closet, the second bedroom, a hall closet and even a bit from the master bedroom to create an en suite bathroom. On the left, you can catch a glimpse of the second bedroom, which was turned into an office.

A wardrobe from Ikea, outfitted to look like architecture, replaced the walk-in closet, forming a wall between the bedroom and bathroom. The bathroom has a separate water closet, and the couple knew that keeping the rest of the space open to the bedroom and hallway would work just fine for them.

Since the house isn't big on closet space, the couple learned to make the most of every inch, extending storage to the ceiling in here, for example. The house has also made them good about perpetually purging and keeping only what they use.



BEFORE: The master bathroom was too tight and chopped-up, had a terrible flow, and wasn't at all suitable for two people. The challenge was to expand it without enlarging the footprint of the house. They borrowed space from the bedroom, which they use only for sleeping, to have a more functional master bath.



New windows and a new skylight bathe the room in light. Because the windows face the side yard and a wall, no coverings are needed for privacy.

Worth noting in the walk-in shower are the Starphire glass and the linear slot drain. Small drains are often something we don't pay attention to when picking them out, but here you can see how its long rectangular shape suits the architecture.

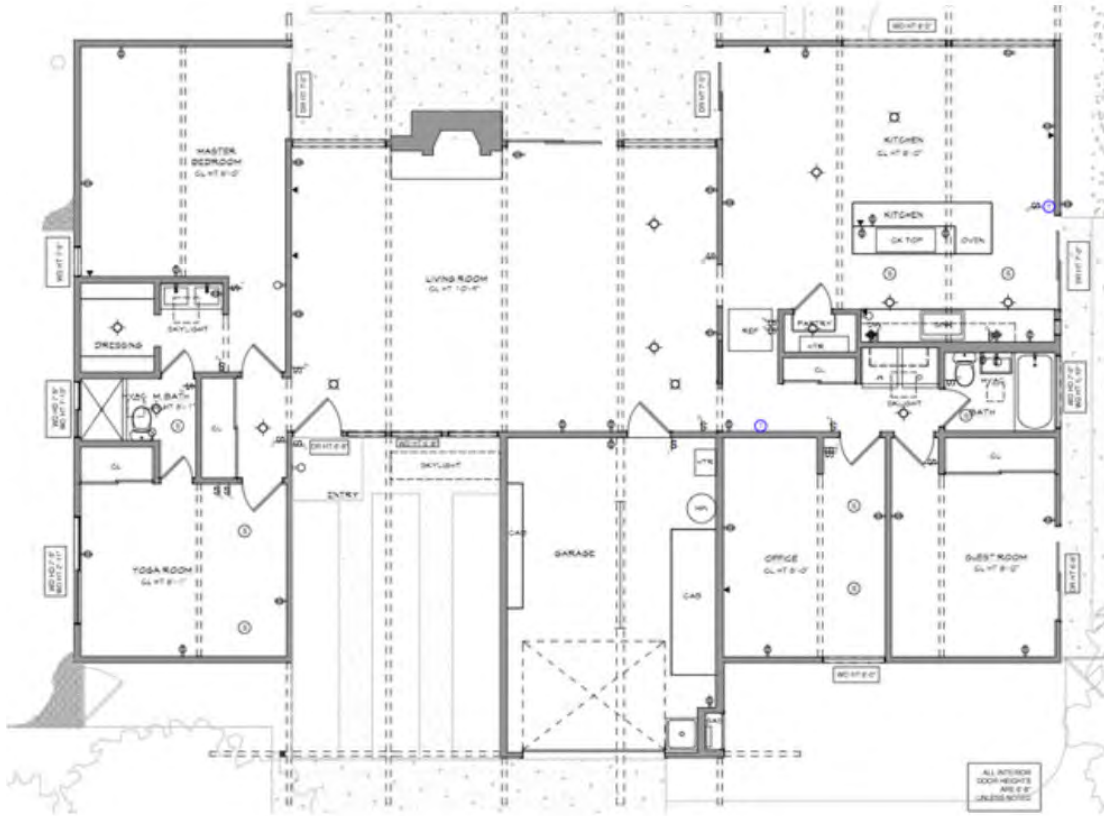


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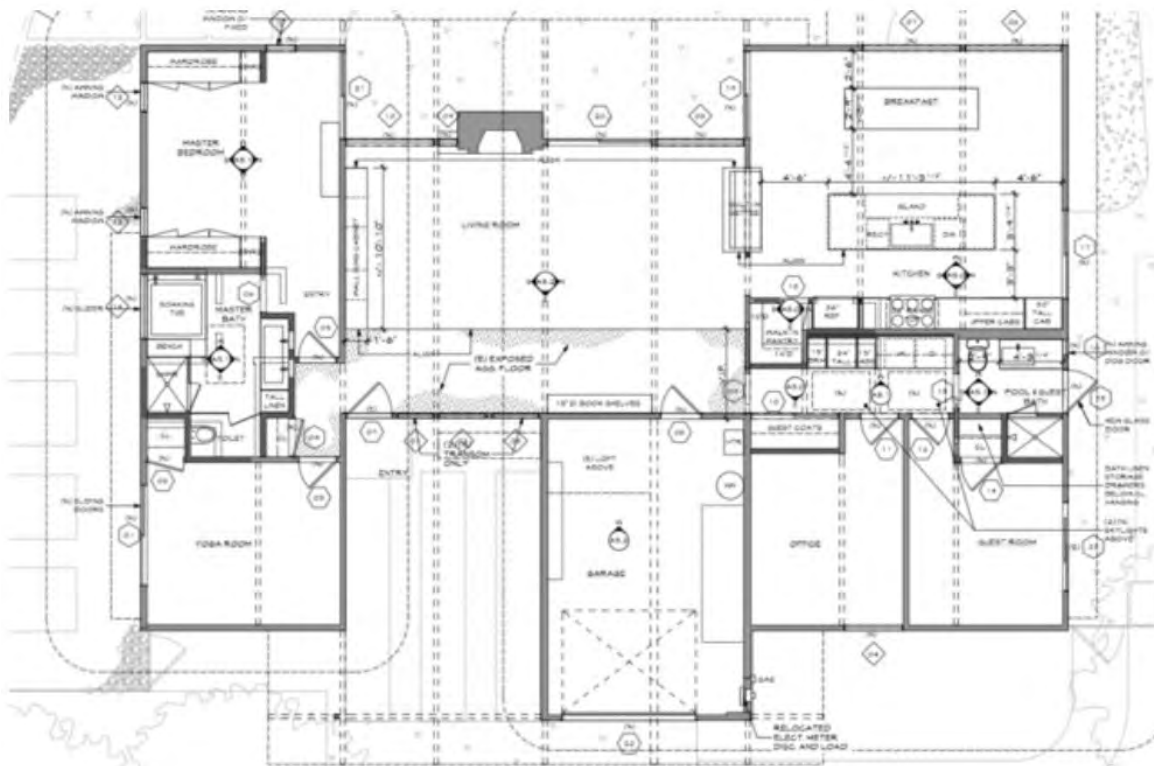
To make the bathroom function well for two people, the architects created quadrants: soaking tub, walk-in shower, vanity and separate water closet. The layout leaves room for flow in the middle. "Usually a bathroom that works this well for two would be larger than this," Budd says.

A beautiful ceramic tile complements the original polished concrete floors, as does a light gray Silestone countertop.

Wall paint (in bedroom and bathroom): Boothbay Gray, Benjamin Moore; tile: Ceramic Tile Design; sinks: Kohler; floating vanity: Ikea; Silestone countertop: Fox Marble & Granite



BEFORE: Here is the original plan. The dotted lines are the beams in the ceiling.



AFTER: Here is the new plan. A few small things changed after it was drawn: The bathtub (left side) got a little bigger, and as mentioned, the kitchen sink and range switched positions. The

This is the “before” and “after” site plan. The architects reconfigured the guest wing to provide a door that lets guests access the backyard directly. The door also allows everyone at the pool to slip in to use the bathroom. The final result of the planning is a home with a consistent tone throughout that meets the homeowners’ modern-day needs while honoring Joseph Eichler’s original intent.

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