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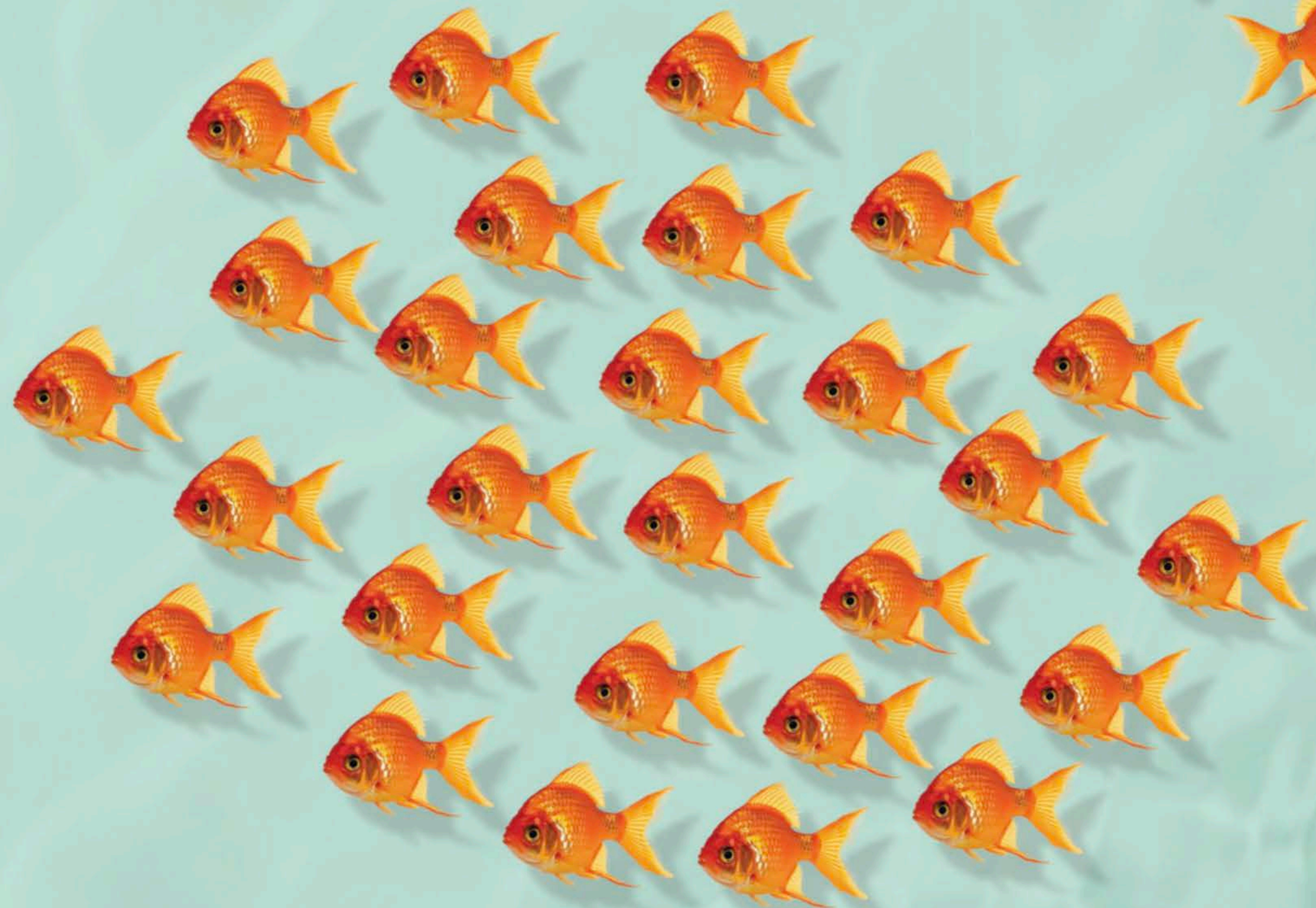
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Arlington

Public Exodus

Why is private school
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ARLINGTON ■ FALLS CHURCH ■ MCLEAN



The front entryway's Dutch door includes a built-in doggie door.



The kitchen features clerestory windows, Shaker-style cherry cabinets and an ocean blue backsplash.

Brilliant Blue

In Bluemont, a thoughtful renovation with bold color choices makes a family home much more usable—and fun.

By Wendy Kantor

Once it had been the perfect starter home, but now Erika Chiang and David Theisz were feeling cramped. They'd adopted a dog, had a baby and were thinking about having a second child. They needed more space, but didn't want to move.

Though the 894-square foot bungalow was too snug for their growing family, there were positives. They loved its high ceilings and the ample backyard, which included multiple decks, a koi pond, a pergola, a hot tub and a shed.

They also loved their neighbors, and

how close they were to walking trails and parks. "It's so convenient," Theisz says. "We wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

This is a common problem for Arlington homeowners, says Michael Sauri, president and co-owner of TriVistaUSA Design + Build: "We love where we live, but we hate what we live in."

TriVistaUSA's renovation, completed in June 2022, more than doubled the family's living space, expanding the floor plan to about 2,200 square feet, with five bedrooms and 3 1/2 bathrooms.

It's a far cry from the coed dorm Chiang and Theisz lived in when they met during their first year at the University of Virginia, though back then they were just friends.

After college, Theisz served in the Navy. When he got a job in D.C. in 2009, he posted on Facebook, asking for recommendations of places to live in Northern Virginia. Chiang responded with suggestions, and he took her to dinner to thank her. "That was basically the start," he remembers. "We kind of just got together."

ANGELA NEWTON ROY

ANGELA NEWTON ROY

■ brilliant blue



Once mustard yellow, the exterior is now aqua blue.



Moody blues in a bathroom



A stained glass transom above the mudroom accentuates the home's high ceilings.

They married in May 2014 aboard the USS Constellation, a warship in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and lived as newlyweds in a high-rise in Ballston. After six months of house hunting, they found the three-bedroom house in Bluemont near the Bon Air Park Rose Garden.

"It was very yellow [make that mustard yellow]," recalls Chiang, now 41, who serves as president of the parents' advocacy group Mothers of North Arlington (MONA) and works full-time for the National Science Foundation.

The tiny Craftsman-style house had been built in 1949. The previous owners believed it was once the administrative offices for the local water company.

"That tracks, because [it] had 10-foot ceilings, which is weird for [that era]," says Theisz, also 41, a Department of Defense employee for the Air Force.

Though it was small, they liked how open it felt, with natural light pouring in through skylights, and the fact that it occupied a corner lot with a fenced-in backyard—perfect for a dog. "We saw this place as having a ton of potential," he says. "We could see a future here."

The couple purchased the home in September 2015, adopted a border collie named Juno, and had their first child, Henry, in November 2017. But when they started thinking about a second baby in the summer of 2020, they realized they needed more room. Their

third bedroom was already doing triple duty, serving as an office, guest bedroom and a playroom. And the house was only one story, with a less-than-practical storage loft that they could only access with a steel ladder.

At that point, the structure had already been renovated, updated and expanded multiple times. "Their property was the result of many, many, many additions over time, many tweaks and changes," Sauri says. "It was an amalgam of bright ideas. We tried to bring some unity to it. We also wanted it to be wacky and fun."

During construction, the owners moved into Theisz's brother's basement for 7 ½ months with their toddler son

and dog. In May 2021, they welcomed a baby girl, Haley. Days later, they were in the showroom selecting interior finishes. The renovation was completed in June 2022.

To add more space, you can either build up or out, Sauri says, and in this case, they did both. The remodel included a "pop top," adding a second floor, as well as an addition.

These days, the family's favorite space is the modern farmhouse-style kitchen, anchored by a large island with a quartz countertop. "We can talk to guests at the island while we're working in the kitchen, or just have breakfast [there] with the kids," Chiang says.

"I wanted to be able to see the kids outside in the yard," she adds. "That was important to me."

Since the kitchen is in the center of the home, they worried it would be dark. Taking advantage of the high ceilings, TriVistaUSA added windows above the cabinets to bring more light inside. The rippled tile of a St. Tropez blue glass backsplash has a sense of movement, like the ocean.

The new layout is also more functional. Previously, people had to walk through a narrow kitchen to access the backyard via a small side door. Now, they can move in and out easily through wide double French doors.

The improved flow made their son's fifth birthday party a breeze, Chiang says. "The [kids] would go play outside, come in, grab snacks and go back. It's really awesome now."

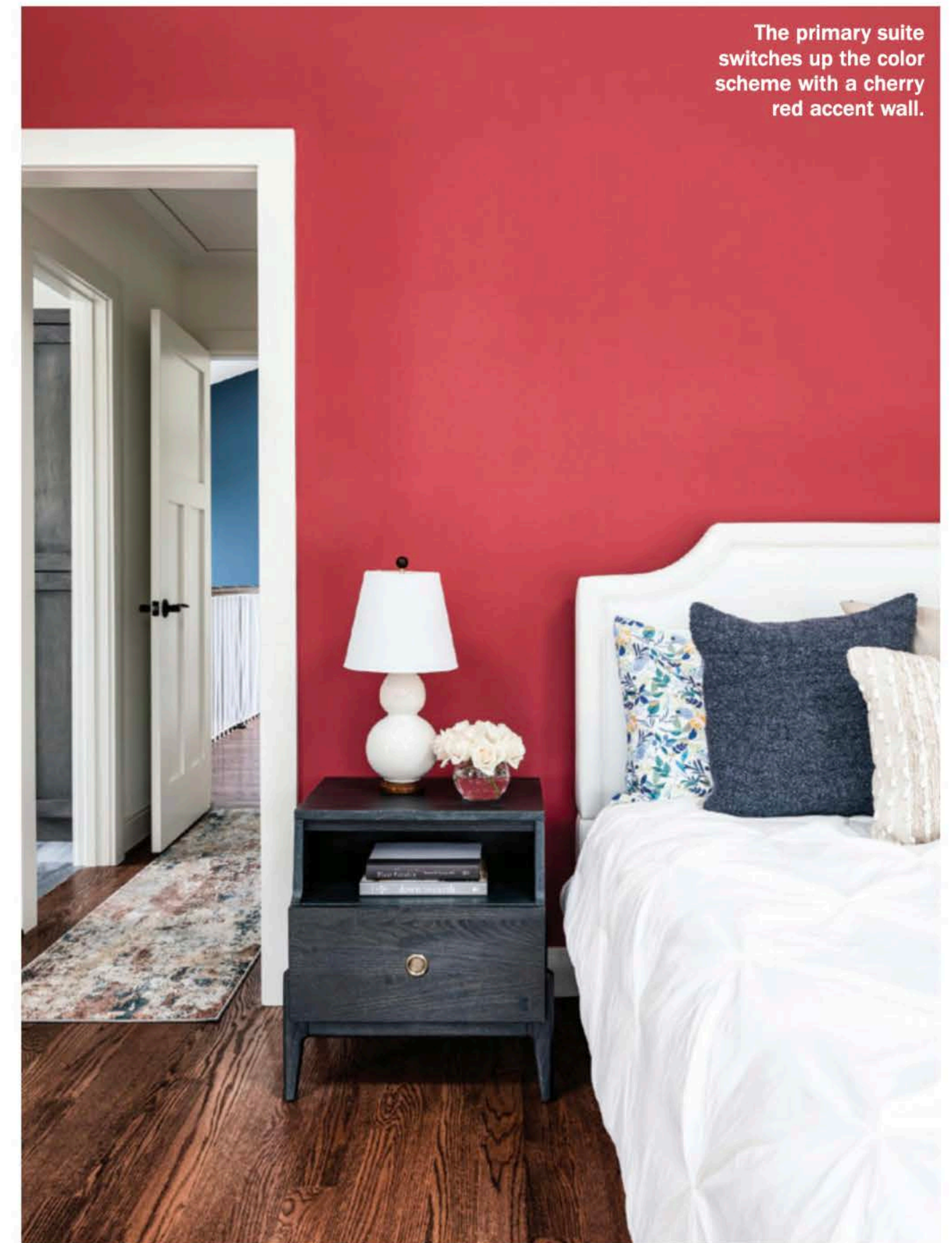
The remodel also added a mudroom with an interior pocket door, which they can partition off as needed—"if we need to sequester the dog in there, or somebody's wet from the hot tub, they can change," Theisz says.

For the front entrance, the couple selected a Dairy Dutch Door—the vintage-looking farmhouse kind that allows you to open the top half. Made by a company in Colorado, the door caught their eye when they were online shopping. They liked that it had a built-in doggie door, "so I didn't have to cut it," Theisz says. They added new hardware and a portico to catch the rain.

Blue is a running color theme, inside and out. In addition to the kitch-



A his-and-hers vanity in the primary bath

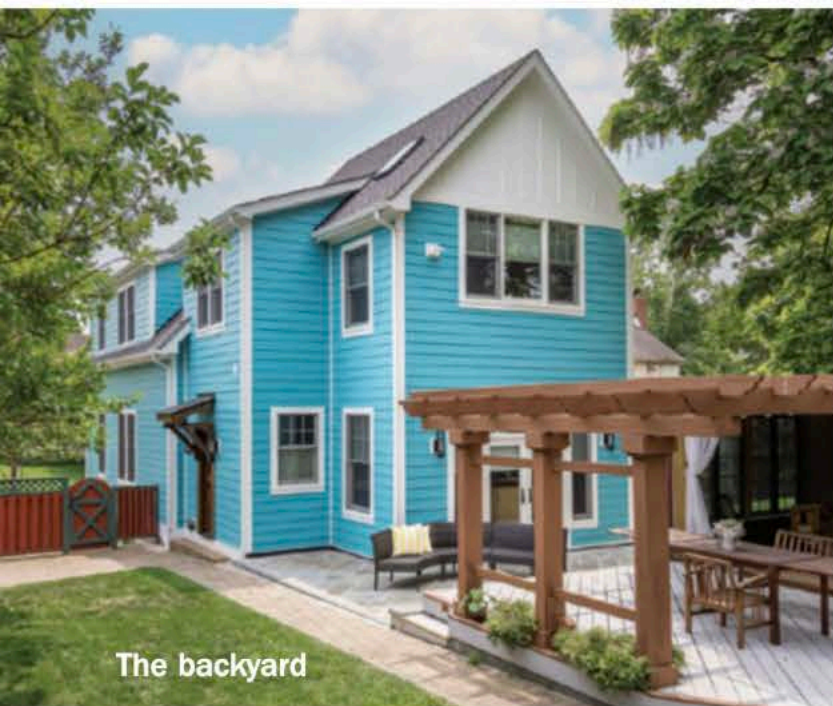


The primary suite switches up the color scheme with a cherry red accent wall.

NOVA SOUL IMAGERY (EXTERIOR); ANGELA NEWTON ROY (INTERIORS)

ANGELA NEWTON ROY

■ brilliant blue



The backyard

en backsplash, it's the base note in a stained-glass transom above the mudroom, and a predominant hue in everything from bathroom tiles to area rugs. A cerulean accent wall provides a jolt of color in the living room.

And then there's the home's robin's egg exterior. After months of driving around Arlington and checking out other houses, they selected a bright, turquoise blue. "We wanted something that wasn't drab," Chiang says. "A lot of new homes in our neighborhood just are beige or cream or gray. We wanted something to pop."

Given that the house had previously been painted mustard yellow, they figured the new hue wouldn't be too controversial. Now, Theisz says, they're just the blue house on the corner.

With the renovation, 5-year-old Henry and 2-year-old Haley have their own bedrooms. Chiang has a dedicated office, and the couple's bedroom has a walk-in closet. "It's definitely spacious, which has caused me to acquire more clothes and shoes!" Chiang says, half joking.

The primary bath has a double sink and a skylight in the shower. Every bedroom has skylights with solar-powered blinds. For convenience, they also added a washer and dryer upstairs.

The main floor, meanwhile, includes a guest room with an en suite bath. "Thinking way ahead, it would be ideal for aging in place in the very far future," Chiang says.



Maple floors with a walnut finish are a unifying element throughout the house.

Fanciful colors aside, there is a pragmatism to the design. Having a bedroom suite on the ground floor means the couple can stay in the house long-term—even if they reach a point when they can no longer climb the custom curved staircase that makes a statement in the living room.

Chiang was surprised by how much she loves that staircase. "We didn't even think about how it would look until they were installing it," she says. "It's amazing." During the holidays, she hangs Christmas stockings on the railing.

Under the stairs, TriVistaUSA built a storage closet, making efficient use of what otherwise would have been wasted space.

"I say all the time: It is so easy to

live here," Theisz says. "It's not crowded anymore." ■

Wendy Kantor also writes about chainsaw artist Andrew Mallon in this issue.

THE PROJECT:

COMPLETED:
2022

NEIGHBORHOOD:
Bluemont

SQUARE FOOTAGE:
2,200

BUILDER/DESIGNER:
TriVistaUSA Design + Build
trivistausa.com