

A BIGGER FAMILY, A BIGGER SPACE

A third-floor addition brings light and space to a Fairmount home—just in time for baby.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARRY HALKIN

BIG CHANGES CAN make life hectic. Consider the stress of home renovations or the birth of a child. Combining those two could prove too much for many, but not for locals Kevin Rasmussen and Vivian Su. As principals at Rasmussen/Su, an architecture firm specializing in residential properties, the couple twice started new home projects while preparing for the arrival of a new baby.

“Our pattern has been to start a major renovation project [preceding] the birth of each of our girls,” Su says. “Isabela was born in the midst of the kitchen renovation, and Rebecca was born during the construction of an entirely new third floor.”

Vivian and Kevin’s series of renovations and expansions to their classic Fairmount row home have helped the couple strike a true work-life balance, accommodating both a growing family and a prosperous business.

A SPACE ODYSSEY

“We knew that we wanted to renovate the kitchen fairly soon. It was a little dark, outdated and it was inefficiently laid out,” Su says.

Since row home kitchens are traditionally tight, the couple’s main goals were to maximize the amount of space offered in the tiny footprint.

“Our solution was to widen and center the exterior opening to the backyard and move the entrance to the basement around the corner. That way, the cabinetry could run the entire length of the room on both sides,” Su says. The flooring was replaced with honed limestone, while the countertops were finished with polished granite.







STEEL HOME

"We worked very closely with our steel fabricator to come up with the design and the connections," Su says of the staircase railings. The translucent panels were created from Polygal, which she describes as "a relatively inexpensive polycarbonate panel used often for roofing applications." For the stairs themselves, the couple turned to Teragren, an environmentally responsible manufacturer, for bamboo treads and risers.



MAKE IT WORK

A few holdovers from the home's previous owners left a bit to be desired for the couple. A 1970s-style bifold door to the basement was one of the first items to go. As an alternative, the family's carpenter created a new door, complete with a cat entrance, out of original bead board that had been removed and stored in the basement.

Mirroring the plank-like look of the walls and new door, the kitchen table is an inexpensive score from Ikea. "We made it more formal and functional by adding a custom glass top," Su says.





NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Building a third level on the two-floor home made sense as the couple prepared for another arrival. "The goal for the third-story addition was to add more bedrooms and a bath since we knew we had a second baby on the way. We also work from home, so we needed a dedicated office space," Su says.

The end product is an airy space that can be as open or closed off as the couple needs, thanks to translucent sliding panes. "We wanted the infill panels to let the light travel across the entire floor, but still provide privacy, so the Polygal panels were perfect for this application," Su says.

The modern bedroom/office combo is completed with bamboo flooring, a neutral color scheme and cabinetry crafted from pre-fabricated boxes from CabParts.





STRIKE GOLD

Calacatta Gold honed marble lends a stylish touch to the bathroom's floors, walls and vanity top. "It is a traditional material that can also be used to look clean and modern," Su says. The floors are heated, and the family cat, Bruno, can often be found lounging here.