

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Going Solar—Two Years Later
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Lessons Learned from a Remodel

By Sophie Braccini

Everyone said it couldn't be done in four months, but it was—just one week after the estimated completion date—the total remodel of a ranch house that added 800 square feet and rebuilt the entire interior; all that was left at one point was a wall. But a stressful four months it was, for homeowners who had never remodeled anything, not even a closet. We survived, without

a single, major fight.

One month into our new space, we're still settling down and after the last check was cut to the contractor we had to admit that we went over our budget by 20 percent. Was it worth it? We are sure that our living space is much more pleasant. The financial wisdom of it all remains to be assessed.

Our ranch house presented some challenges: Two of our three kids shared a bedroom, the entertainment space was far from optimal, and the galley kitchen was not the hub of our family life. When we looked for a larger space, we found out that our fixer-upper home would be hard to sell in the current market; in fact, two of our neighbors took their homes off the market because of insufficient or failed offers.

We had problems in the past finding the right design for a remodel. We thought our request was simple: add a bedroom, a bathroom, a dining room, and transform the kitchen. But our lot, with its pie-slice shape and a hill behind, was not an easy fix.



The new dining room has a western exposure.

Photos Andy Scheck

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