



Eight signature design elements transform a brick ranch

Ranch Makeover, Bungalow Style

BY DANIEL S. MORRISON

Before and after images of David and Kathy Griffin's Arlington, Va., house have a lot in common—except for appearance. Both the original 1950s brick and block rambler (commonly known as a ranch house in other parts of the United States) and the early-20th-century bungalow design the Griffins copied filled the affordable-housing needs of a growing population. Both styles evolved with little input from architects and were built en masse for the middle class.

Ramblers make a great start

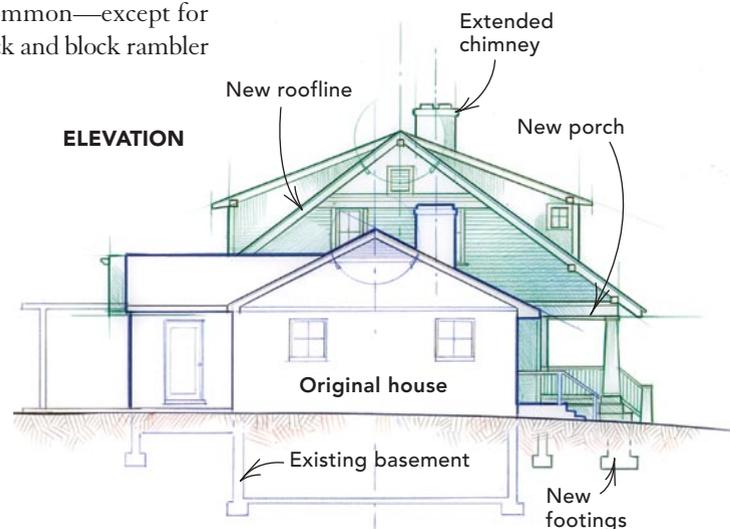
Utility and affordability are common traits of both house styles, but the bungalow design, with its outgoing porch and sheltering roof, has become desirable while the introverted rambler hasn't. Brick and block ramblers may not offer much to look at, but they present an excellent starting point for renovation.

Practically bombproof, the foundation and the first-floor walls are typically strong enough to support a second floor without additional reinforcement, and because they're plentiful, ramblers are relatively affordable. They are residential blank slates, allowing you to go in almost any direction: Cape, colonial, contemporary, or in this case, bungalow.

Some parts, however, are more worth saving than others (sidebar p. 59). The Griffins collected photographs and illustrations of details, fixtures, and materials that they wanted to incorporate into their renovated house. David and Kathy compiled their preferences in a three-ring binder and presented this idea book to their design team, principal architect Charles Moore and project architect Sarah Farrell.

Double the living space without doubling the footprint

A few years before the transformation, the Griffins hired Moore's firm to update the house with new energy-efficient windows and to add a



GO UP AND OUT

A strong foundation and wall framing, along with existing power, water, and sewer service, can make an extreme makeover much faster than building new. Postwar ramblers and ranch houses provide an excellent starting point in an established neighborhood at an affordable price. Another asset is a mature landscape that's already in place. Photo facing page taken at A on floor plan.

DEFINED YET OPEN, SPACIOUS YET COZY



This makeover doubled the living space without enlarging the footprint very much. Adding as much to the front of the house as setbacks allowed, along with tucking a second floor under a big roof, makes the house look like a one-story home. It feels cozy because you can see from one end of the house to the other. Public and private spaces are defined by half-walls with tapered columns, pass-throughs, and ceiling beams.



SPECS

Bedrooms: 3

Bathrooms: 2

Size: 925 sq. ft. (before),
1857 sq. ft. (after)

Cost: \$250,000

Completed: 2003

Location: Arlington, Va.

Architect: Moore Architects;
Sarah Farrell, project architect

Builder: Gabe Nassar,
GN Contracting Inc.

0 2 4 8 ft.

North

A Photos taken at lettered positions.

new kitchen wing and porch to the back of the house. The planned bungalow transformation, while an extreme makeover, had a strict budget: The Griffins required that the kitchen stay nearly intact and that the windows be salvaged.

The opened-up kitchen wing was closed partially to create a more formal dining room, but with a peek-through over the stove (photo facing page). The replacement windows were reused in the front wall, which was moved toward the street about 1½ ft., the maximum that setback requirements allowed (floor plans above). Moving the front wall of the house this small amount added enough to the front rooms to boost their utility while leaving plenty of space for a comfortable front porch and yard.

The architects doubled the living space (and the height) of the Griffins' house, adding a bedroom, a bathroom, an office, and storage space without making the structure seem imposing from the street and without making it look like a two-story house. In fact, by mov-

ing it closer to the street, the house is more inviting with its deep, neighborhood-friendly porch and its sheltering roof.

Subliminal boundaries in an open plan

Inside, the comfortable-yet-practical feeling continues. Bungalow trim elements are typically simple in profile but elegant in proportion. Flat moldings combine to form wide casings, and cornices support the classical proportions of earlier architectural styles while rejecting the level of ornamentation. Extravagant details, if used at all, are saved for formal areas. To keep this project affordable, the architects chose paint-grade trim rather than the dark-stained wood common to bungalows. Their decision allowed for a higher level of refinement (tall wainscot paneling and coffered ceilings) without a significantly higher level of cost.

Because they'd lived in this house for a few years, the Griffins knew the existing floor plan's strengths and shortcomings. The circulation



OBSTACLE OR OPPORTUNITY?

How to prioritize a large-scale home renovation

It can be tempting to err on both sides of the salvage equation. If you demolish everything, you'll undoubtedly rebuild much of it. But saving too much can waste time, effort, and money. Here are five tips from the architects for figuring it out.

- **Work around the fireplace. It will suggest at least part of the layout.** Because it's expensive to move, the fireplace dictates a cozy zone. It can be a living-room centerpiece, part of a den, or, as in this house, an inglenook.
- **Work around the stair location because it defines the circulation path.** Stairs are not expendable. Rather than reframe the floor to accommodate a new staircase placement, let the stairs show you the circulation paths and landing locations.
- **Plumbing and electrical are relatively inexpensive to move.** Electrical cable and plumbing pipe are cheap, and electricians and plumbers are good at rerouting them. Your kitchen or bathroom may be in a particular location, but that location may not be right for the updated floor plan.
- **Save the floor, not the ceiling.** The existing ceiling framing most likely will be undersize for a second floor, so don't worry about saving it. On the other hand, an already installed hardwood floor is protected easily during construction and is worth saving.
- **Be committed to a great final product.** Know what you want, and be willing to pay for it. Actively defining your wants by collecting photos and studying use patterns goes a long way toward speeding up a job—while experiencing fewer surprises and keeping closer to budget.



Photo taken at C on floor plan.

A wall opening extends the view. This kitchen addition took place before the full renovation. The wall opening above the stove links interior spaces and provides a view straight through the house. Photo taken at B on floor plan.

8 SIGNATURE ELEMENTS OF A BUNGALOW

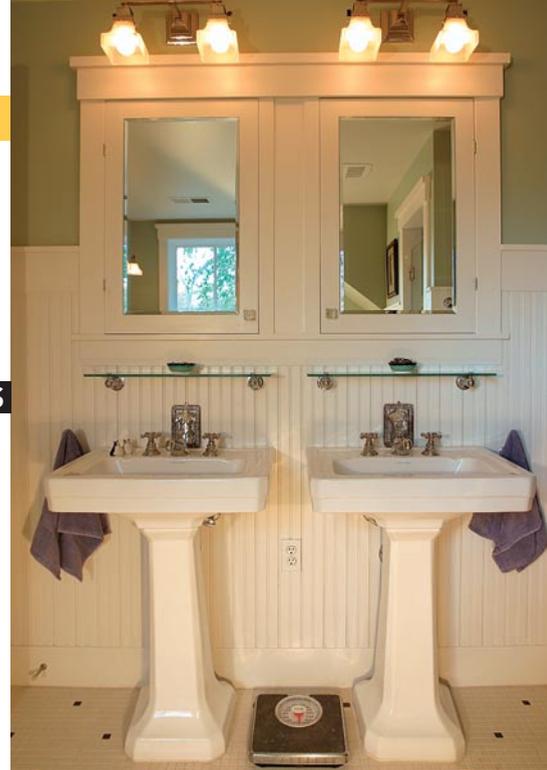
Bungalows differ regionally, incorporating elements of various styles. They all have a few things in common, though: Bungalows are simple, earthy, and practical. Although bungalow style has no formal definition, these eight common elements will help you get into the bungalow ballpark.

INTERIOR ELEMENTS



1 Half-walls with tapered columns define rooms without closing the floor plan. The columns accentuate the strong symmetry so crucial to bungalow designs. Photo above taken at D on floor plan.

2 An inglenook provides a cozy fireside retreat. Besides a fireplace, the recessed area typically includes built-in seating, built-in bookcases, or both. Natural lighting is important. Photo left taken at E on floor plan.



3 Elegant trim details are based on simple profiles. Individual trim profiles are simple, but the joinery and detailing are exquisite. High wall paneling, coffered ceilings, picture-rail bands that wrap around windows, and door head casings are common trim elements. Photo above taken at F on floor plan.



4 Period light fixtures add authenticity. Because bungalows were among the first houses to be wired for electricity, lighting fixtures were chosen with the same care as art might have been. Light shades were made with mica, amber glass, or stained glass, and the fixtures often were brass. Photo taken at G on floor plan.

EXTERIOR ELEMENTS

5 A large dormer uses space efficiently but keeps the house profile small. Either a shed or gable dormer set into a deeply overhanging roof makes the bungalow look like a one-story house when, in fact, it is two stories.

6 Stout columns anchor the roof. A deep, sheltering roof is the dominant exterior feature. Eave and gable-end overhangs give the roof a protective and massive presence.

7 Abundant windows offer natural light, fresh air, and an outdoor connection. One of the original concepts of bungalows was healthfulness. Lots of fresh air and natural light promise clean living as well as a clear head.

8 A sheltered porch invites neighborly interaction and provides an intermediate layer of protection between indoors and out. The porch also is a transition from private to public space—from the house to the neighborhood.

patterns devised for the updated floor plan are from models of actual living patterns, and visual cues make these patterns subconsciously apparent. Partial walls with massive tapered columns define individual spaces without chopping up the floor plan. In the Griffins' home, you can see from one end of the house to the other in both directions, yet semiprivate spaces, such as the inglenook (photo facing page), are defined clearly.

The architects also used color to distinguish different spaces. The main color, gray, is used in the central portion of the house (foyer and dining room). Other colors (yellow in the inglenook and kitchen; green in the living room and bathroom) have the same value as the central gray. For these earth-tone colors to separate the space effec-

tively, they're placed adjacent to the central gray. Yellow rooms don't touch each other, nor do they touch green rooms. Both yellow and green touch only gray. In this way, the colored rooms are clearly secondary destinations from the central travel lane.

Light fixtures are a trademark of bungalow design because bungalows were among the first houses built with electrical wiring. The fixtures celebrated this technological advancement with decorative-glass shades and brass bodies (www.lightsource.net, 509-747-4552; www.rejuvenation.com, 888-401-1900). □

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