

# A House

# That Brings the Family Together

Spaces for parents and children to enjoy individual interests orbit around light-filled gathering places



I often spend 10 to 12 hours with new clients before I go anywhere near the drafting table. Such was the case with this house, though it didn't take long to recognize that family values were the most important thing to the homeowners. And what better way to celebrate a family than to nurture its creative juices. From the art room and individual offices to the children's bedroom lofts, family members have plenty of places to be themselves. No one's going to get lost in this house, though, because everything orbits around the living areas to keep the family connected even when they're doing their own things.

This remodel also turned out well because the homeowners lived in the house for a full year before they decided to make changes. They knew what they wanted. Besides creating spaces for individual interests in art and music, they wanted the house to connect better with the site, and they wanted to bring sunlight into interior spaces.

### The new floor plan keeps the family connected

The original floor plan had a few problems. On the main floor, the front entry was located poorly. The entry the homeowners used regularly opened into the kitchen with no closet or place to put shoes or coats. The kitchen was on the north side of the house where it missed most of the daylight, and a wall separated the kitchen from the dining room.

Upstairs, three bedrooms and two small bathrooms were crowded into too small an area. The lower level was a daisy chain of awkward spaces, including a laundry room that was two floors away from the bedrooms. Worst of all, the lower level was not connected to the backyard.

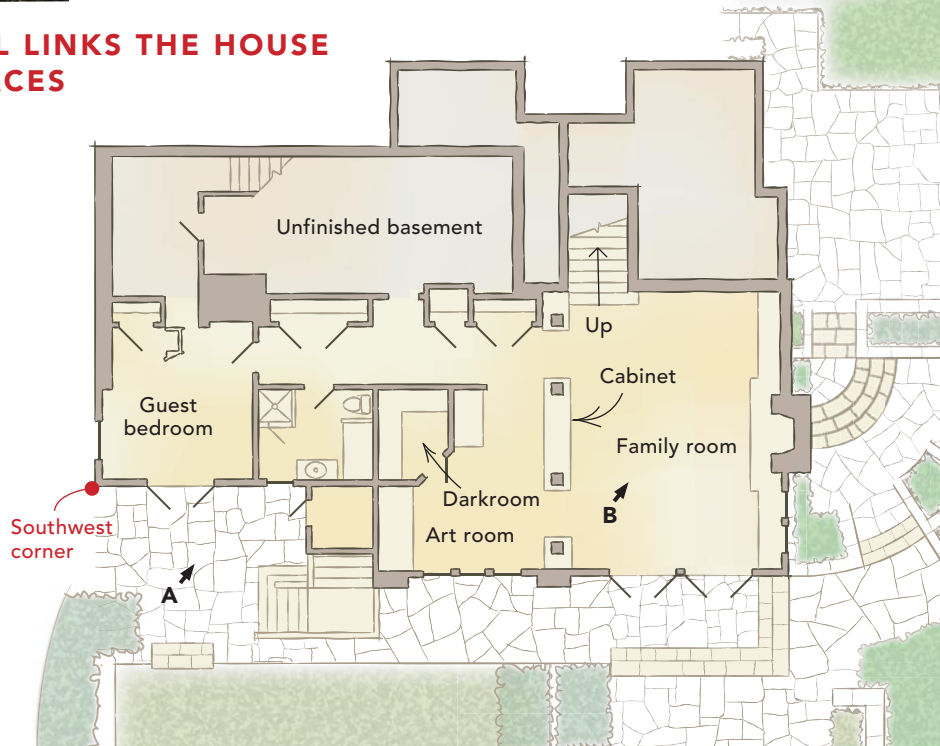
The addition of a new family room on the lower level and a new entry on the main level solved many problems and expanded the upper level so that I could rearrange the bedroom layout. The family room is now the heart of the house. In addition to

### THE LOWER LEVEL LINKS THE HOUSE TO OUTDOOR SPACES

Separated from the family room by only a cabinet is an art room equipped with everything family members need to be creative, including inspiring views of the gardens. The family room and terrace connection offers a choice of places for family and friends to get together. Even the guest bedroom connects to the yard with a shaded veranda. Photo left taken at A on floor plan.

0 2 4 8 ft.

Photos taken at lettered positions.



being a great place for family and friends to hang out, the family room has a variety of spaces radiating from it. Its vaulted ceiling and many windows and glass doors let natural light pass into these surrounding spaces. The family room has a strong connection to the backyard by way of a row of French doors and a sunny terrace. The dining room, kitchen, and office on the main level and one bedroom on the upper level all have operable interior windows that open to the family room from above (floor plan, facing page).

The homeowners have so many artistic interests that we decided to include a dedicated space for art projects. This space is adjacent to and open to the family room. Because family members can work on art projects and stay involved with the rest of the household, the room is used frequently.

The new entry on the main level is close to the driveway and includes a sitting area, a walk-in pantry, and an office. On the upper floor, the addition gave me enough space to reconfigure the floor plan and add a laundry room and a sitting area at the top of the stairway (photo pp. 108-109). Connecting purposeful and personal spaces—the bedrooms with the sitting area, for example—was a theme that I used throughout the house.

### **Making an interior kitchen an inviting space**

Although the kitchen is now in the middle of the house, it is in a better place than it was before the renovation. To take the curse off the kitchen, I made sure it was open to all the adjacent rooms and was full of sunlight. To achieve these goals in a room in the middle of the house, I used a large skylight and a few interior windows.

The skylight, which is trimmed by a coffered ceiling, delivers sunlight from the roof down through the upper level of the house and into the kitchen. Located over the counter space and stove, the skylight makes this kitchen a pleasant place to cook.

The interior windows in the kitchen and other areas are a powerful element that connects spaces and people and lets sunlight into the deepest areas of the house. The windows allow a person in one room to stay involved in what's happening in the next room, or they can be closed to isolate noise in any room. The leaded-glass windowpanes are consistent in detail with the exterior windows.

### **Exterior details emphasize the new scale**

As part of the renovation, I extended the dining room to make more space and to create another place that connects the house to the site. An exterior stairway leads down from the dining room to the



*A new family room is a big addition to the house. Most of the addition space is used for this family room. With a vaulted ceiling and plenty of windows and French doors, the family room lets lots of sunlight into the house. Photo taken at B on floor plan.*

Interior windows connect spaces and people, and let sunlight deep into the house.



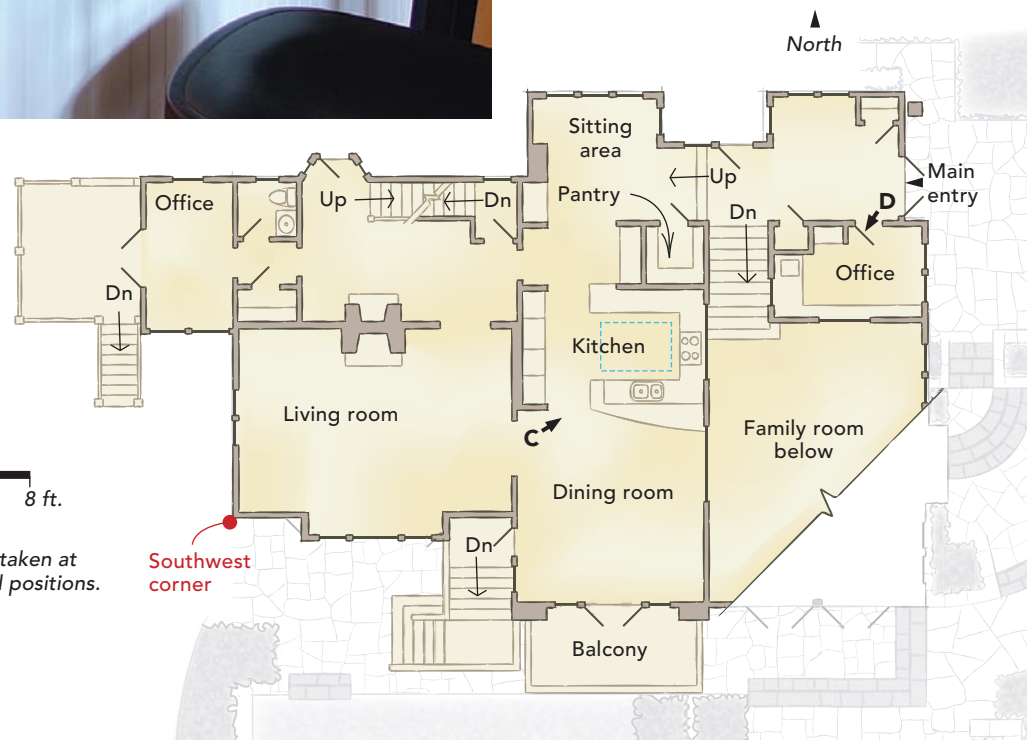
A small office, designed for a family member with an interest in Japanese flower arranging, opens to the family room and kitchen through operable interior windows. Photo above taken at D on floor plan.

## THE MAIN LEVEL REVOLVES AROUND THE KITCHEN

To create space for a new, more functional entry, the kitchen was relocated to the center of the house. The design works because the kitchen is open to all the adjacent spaces and because a large skylight shaft delivers sunlight to the kitchen. The dining room connects to outdoor spaces through French doors that open to a balcony. There's also an outdoor staircase leading to the backyard. Photo above taken at C on floor plan.

0 2 4 8 ft.

Photos taken at lettered positions.





**An artistic touch for an artistic family.** Decorative stained-glass windows take advantage of the skylight well that runs through the upper level. Photo taken at E on floor plan.

backyard. Bumping the dining room out from the three-story wall also breaks up the house's large scale. Before the remodel, the backyard terrace was uncomfortable, dominated by an imposing three-story wall. So I also lowered the main roof eaves to shrink the perceived size of the house. In addition, the extended eaves lend a sense of shelter to the outdoor spaces and create dramatic shadow-lines. Finally, I broke up the large roof with dormers, which simultaneously bring in light and provide views from inside the house.

Another strong design element is the new stone chimney (photo back cover). The interior of the new family room is a large space with tall, vaulted ceilings, and it required an appropriately sized fireplace. Outside, the massive chimney provides a strong visual element that appears to anchor the house to the sloping site.

Oversize details were used on most of the exterior trim to balance the scale of the house. Bulky wood brackets and col-

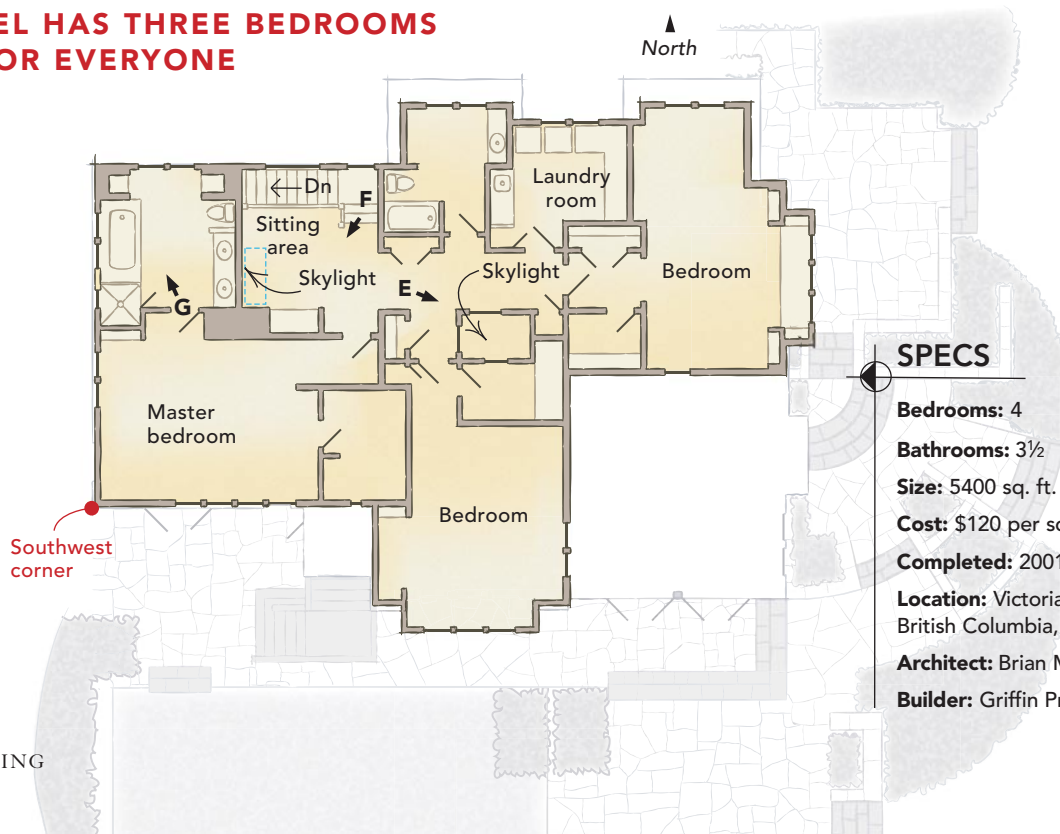


## THE UPPER LEVEL HAS THREE BEDROOMS AND A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

To offset the private and utilitarian nature of the three-bedroom upper level, a small sitting area anchors the top of the stairs. The sitting area offers a place for the family to watch TV together or soak in some sun from the skylight above. For a family of four, a laundry room close to the bedrooms is a great convenience. Photo above center taken at F on floor plan.

0 2 4 8 ft.

Photos taken at lettered positions.



### SPECS

**Bedrooms:** 4

**Bathrooms:** 3½

**Size:** 5400 sq. ft.

**Cost:** \$120 per sq. ft.

**Completed:** 2001

**Location:** Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

**Architect:** Brian Morris

**Builder:** Griffin Properties Ltd.

## Connecting personal spaces with family areas is a theme throughout the house.



umns physically and visually support the massive roof and the new cantilevered dining-room balcony. The windows and doors are trimmed with proportionately wide casings as well. These large details are used to shrink the scale of the house. Inside, the details are much less pronounced.

While most of the exterior details take their cues from the Craftsman style, the interior details are less ornate. The baseboards and window and door casings are simple, flat stock without profiles and are painted white throughout the house. Coffered ceilings in the kitchen and dining room and the interior leaded-glass windows add interest but are not overly elaborate.

### Focal points lead you through the house

Focal points heighten the experience of living in or vis-

iting this home. They add a layer of visual interest as well as encourage movement through the house.

Because light is something that people are drawn toward naturally, the focal points on the exterior walls of the house are the windows and glass doors. They extend views to the gardens and other outdoor spaces and let in sunlight. Instead of having dead ends where these long views terminate within the house, I designed focal points such as built-in cabinetry and display niches for artwork or flower arrangements. In one room, the focal point is sunlight from a skylight above (photo left). □

Brian Morris is an architect in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Photos by Brian Pontolilo, except where noted.



### GREAT IDEA

#### Leaded-glass windows

For the renovation of this 1920s house, we wanted the new wood windows to match the original single-glazed leaded-glass windows. Matching the original windows was no problem. However, the local building code requires that all windows be double-glazed, and a true leaded-glass windowpane cannot be double-glazed. Our solution was to use single-glazed leaded-glass windows with storm windows over them. This system retains the look of single-glazed leaded glass and meets code. Photo left taken at G on floor plan.