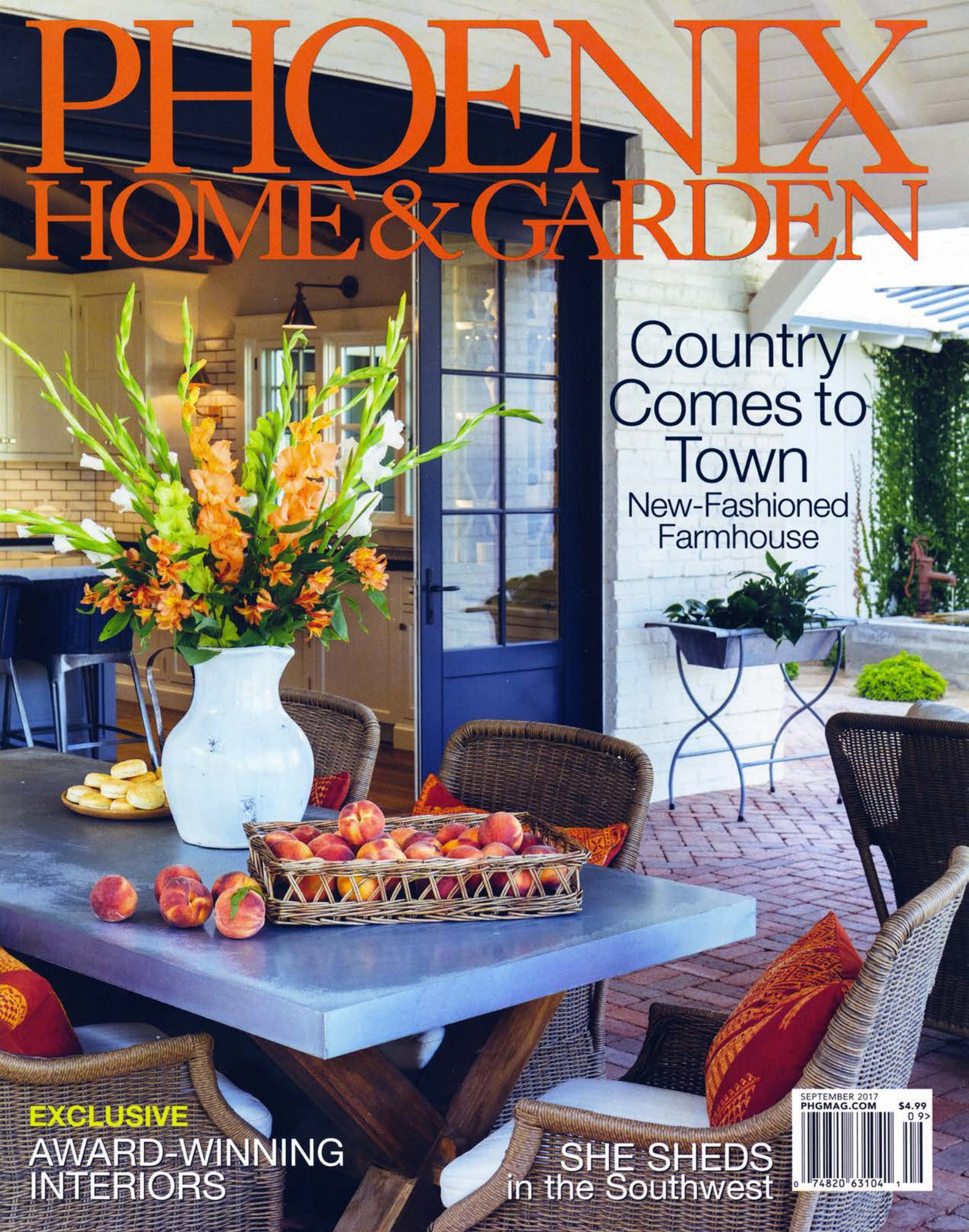




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TOP: Two items on which the wife splurged when decorating the master bedroom were custom window treatments and handmade tile on the fireplace surround. French doors open to a private seating area that overlooks the pool and backyard.



CENTER: Instead of a glass-walled shower in the master bathroom, the homeowners opted for a more private enclosure with a simple glass door.



BOTTOM: In the daughters' rooms—mirror images of each other, one west-facing and one east-facing—Higgins designed spacious nooks that include large window seats surrounded by bookshelves.



Soft shades of blue and minimal furnishings create a sense of simplicity and serenity in the master bedroom. The bed and occasional chairs were left over from the couple's previous home that was torn down to build their dream farmhouse.

The beams are sort of a nod to our made-up story that this was an original building from the 1920s.

—The homeowner



function as a hallway, I would have said, 'I don't know about that.' But when I saw it on paper, I didn't have any qualms about it."

Tying the rooms together visually are high ceilings accented with rustic beams made of reclaimed timber on the interior, and a horizontal inlaid brick pattern and gable treatment that differs from the rest of the house on the exterior, creating the illusion that the core space was once an old structure. "This is the only volume that has the beams. They're sort of a nod to our made-up story that this

was an original building from the 1920s," says the wife, adding with a laugh, "When we first moved in, one of the tradespeople asked how old the house was. She thought it had been here for decades."

The open kitchen was one of the home's most challenging features, according to both the wife and interior designer and *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner Barb Foley. Its large, rectangular shape—open on one side to the dining room and featuring a wall of glass doors on the opposite, with a large



ABOVE RIGHT: The homeowners eschewed a separate breakfast room in favor of an island with extra seating.

ABOVE LEFT: The dining room separates the kitchen and living room, which sits behind the double-sided fireplace. A large skylight over the zinc table brings natural light to the space.



marble-topped island in the center—left practically no space for an efficient work triangle. “We never thought that on a brand new house the kitchen plan would be so complicated,” says the wife. Higgins and Foley came up with the idea of having one end of the island be the cooking zone, with a stove and small island sink, and the other end being the clean-up zone, with the main sink and dishwasher.

A custom red leather-upholstered swinging door, designed by Foley, leads to a butler’s pantry. Inside it are classic

farmhouse touches, including an apron sink, subway tiles and a Dutch door that leads to the outdoors. From the yard, the pantry with its board and batten siding and metal roof adds to the vintage appeal, appearing almost as a small shed that had been tacked on at a later date.

The northernmost volume features the daughters’ rooms—mirror images in size and shape, complete with walk-in closets, en suite bathrooms and expansive windows seats ideal for reading. They are separated by a guest bedroom and bath.





Large in size, the kitchen was nonetheless challenging to design, due to its lack of walls—one side opens to the dining room, while the opposite features large glass doors. Higgins and Foley ended up dividing the room into two zones. The cleanup zone includes a large sink and dishwasher. The cabinetry was custom-made.

This house has an elegant simplicity to it. It's not pretentious, and it feels like it fits the area.

—Michael Higgins, architect

RIGHT: Just off the kitchen is an outdoor patio, complete with a white brick fireplace. "When it's cool, we like to have a fire and sit out here," says the husband. "We didn't want a large outdoor kitchen. We wanted to keep the space kind of old-school."

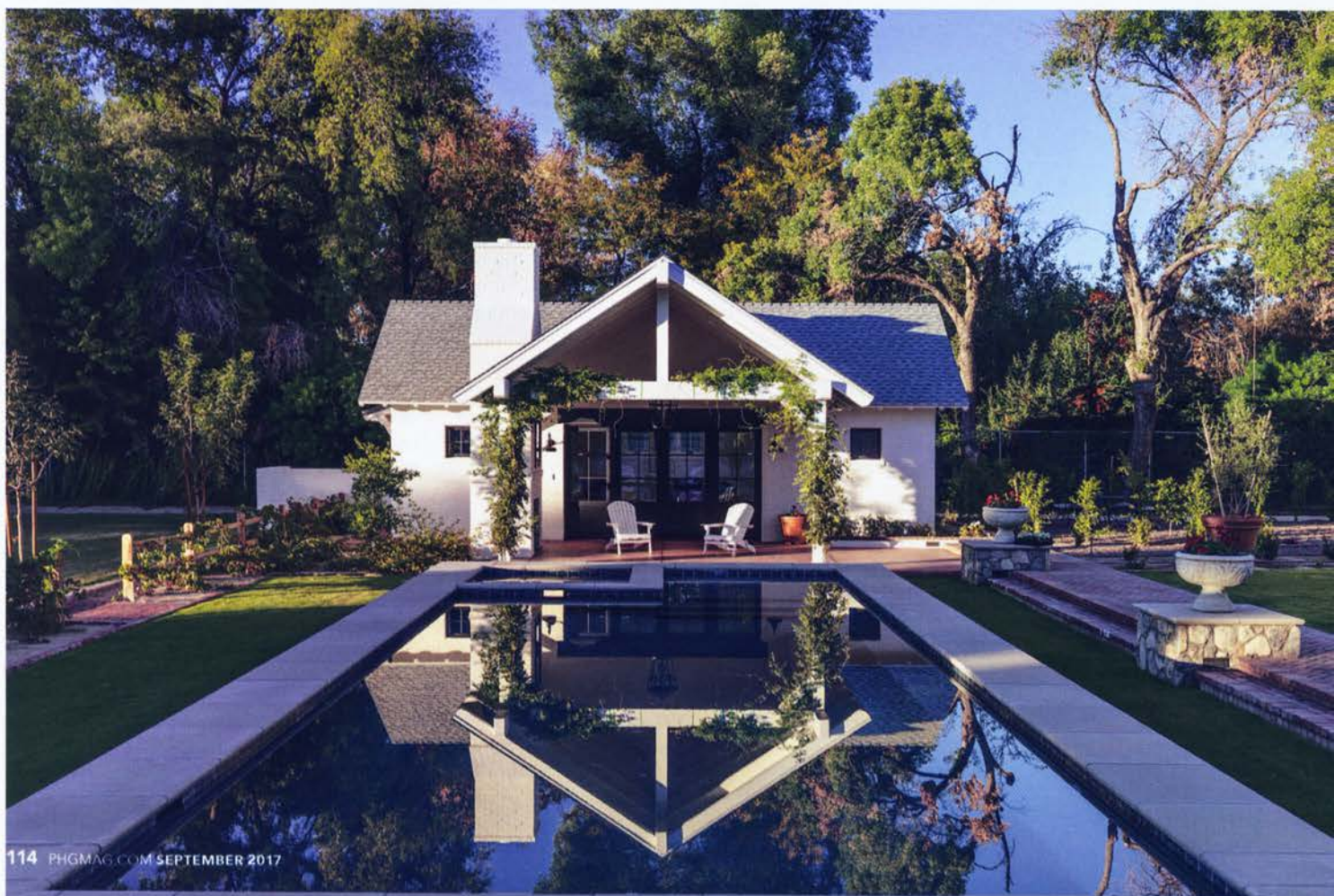
FAR RIGHT: French doors connect the kitchen to the dining patio. An exposed I-beam above the doorway adds an industrial touch.



The southern volume includes a four-car garage and, facing the backyard, the master suite. Here is where you'll also find another of the home's unique touches. The hallway leading to the master bedroom was designed to look as though it had once been a breezeway or exterior porch structure that had been closed in.

Instead of the wide-plank French oak flooring found throughout the rest of the house, the hallway features rustic red brick in a herringbone pattern. The interior wall is also clad in brick to match the home's exteriors and further perpetuate the illusion. "I thought it was neat that it is intentionally fooling guests into thinking that house has been remodeled, when instead it's brand new," says Mann.

The master suite is large but not overwhelming. Most of the furnishings, including the bed and a pair of open-arm occasional chairs that rest near the fireplace, were from the previous house. "We didn't need a huge master," says the wife. "Besides, nobody ever uses those large seating arrangements that you often see in bedrooms."





The en suite bath includes a freestanding tub and two vanities, one on each side of the door. And in a throwback to the 1920s—and for added privacy—the shower is enclosed within solid walls with a narrow glass door for access. Opposite the bath is a walk-in closet with a third vanity. “I wanted to have a vanity in my closet, which some people might think is weird, but it’s really good for marital harmony because I can be as messy as I want to be and the bathroom stays nice and clean,” explains the wife.

French doors lead from the bedroom to a private patio and the expansive backyard. Landscape architect Russell Greey terraced the property, allowing all of the intimate courtyards near the home to be on the same level as the structure, while a few steps down are the pool, pool house and a large, grassy expanse. “We really wanted to create these outdoor rooms,” says the *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner of his landscape design. “We tried to keep a nice manicured lawn that alludes to a pasture.

“Throughout the property, we used a palette of very traditional plants like you would have found in Old Phoenix.

They’re very hardy, ornamental varieties that have been used since the 1920s,” Greey adds. “We didn’t go with drought-resistance plants; instead we tried to be historically accurate. Farmhouses typically aren’t on elaborate landscapes. It’s not an English garden. You don’t need a lot of layering.” The selection of greenery, including dwarf oillies, canna lilies, Indian hawthorne, rosemary, white wisteria and pistachio, Arizona ash and red oak trees complements the home’s clean aesthetic and historical vibe.

As does the pool. Known as a bench-style pool, it rises 18 inches above its grassy surround. “There are no steps, so you have to go over to it, sit down and swing your legs around,” says Mann. “Unless you’re a kid. Then you probably hurdle it.” By eliminating a large deck and raising the pool, it can be easily viewed from the outdoor patios and even from indoors.

Inside and out, the new home exemplifies Phoenix’s bucolic past. “This house has an elegant simplicity to it. It’s not pretentious, and it feels like it fits the area,” notes Higgins. “As the Shakers say, ‘There’s great beauty in simplicity.’” ■

ABOVE: “When you have a nice yard, there’s no need to overly complicate it,” says landscape architect Russell Greey. Korean boxwood frame the start of a curving brick walkway that leads to the entry. To the left is a Fan-Tex ash; to the right is a cathedral oak.

LEFT: Rising 18 inches from the grass and lacking the standard decking, the large bench-style pool reflects a design that was popular in mid 20th century.

RIGHT: With its coachman-style doors, a pair of cupolas, farmhouse lights and strips of grass between each drive, the four-car garage looks like a carriage house. “It could have been overwhelming,” says the husband of the utilitarian space. “It’s a lot of garage.”

See Sources.



Modern

Uncomplicated in Character But Intricate in Design,

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES



A view of the rear of the house highlights its unique architectural elements, including varying roof heights, angles and materials, and brick and board-and-batten siding. "Farmhouses and other older homes are often assemblages of different buildings with different functions, and that's what we were trying to replicate here," says architect Michael Higgins. A split-rail fence covered in Thompson seedless grape vines and flanked by pistachio trees separates the home and pool from a large lawn that the owners jokingly refer to as "the back 40." The building on the left is the pool house.

Farmhouse

a New Home in Central Phoenix Recalls the Valley's Rural Past

PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN DENKER





ABOVE: A favorite feature of the owners and the design/build team alike is the hallway that leads to the master suite. With its red brick floor and white brick wall that matches the exterior, it looks like a covered patio.

RIGHT: Classic farmhouse touches, including an apron sink and Dutch door, are found in the butler's pantry.



Simplicity does not precede complexity but follows it." This quote by Alan Perlis, a leader in the development of computer science, may not have been about architecture or interior design, but its words hold true when it comes to describing one newly built house in midtown Phoenix.

Situated on a lush corner lot just steps from trendy Central Avenue, the picturesque abode harkens back to a time when the surrounding areas were filled with cotton fields instead of family-friendly communities and fresh-picked produce was more plentiful than Priuses. But capturing a sense of history and permanence—and the unpretentiousness found in modest early-20th-century farmhouses—wasn't as effortless as the finished structure makes you believe. From the initial decision to build anew to planning, building and even decorating, every step of the process was carefully considered and purposefully executed, with the end result being a modern home that looked not consistently new but instead like a historic building that had been added onto over the decades.

The homeowners had lived on the 1-acre property for 10 years, during which time they often toyed with the idea of renovating and adding on to the





An open porch with exposed rafters and wisteria-covered columns brings country charm to the pool house. As a nod to an Old Arizona decor element, Higgins chose red concrete for the patio and interior flooring.





The living room features windows on three sides and a vaulted ceiling accented with reclaimed timber beams. The overscaled front window adds a contemporary undertone to the classic style. Both homeowners love the color blue, and its watery shade permeates just about every room in the house. "It's so hot outside, so I wanted something cool and fresh inside," says the wife of the color scheme. The flooring is French oak.



A double-sided fireplace flanked by matching openings separates the living room from the dining room. Interior designer Barb Foley clad the surround in handmade tile.

1950s concrete-block ranch-style house that once stood on the site. "It wasn't an easy decision to tear it down and start over," says the wife. "Ultimately, we decided that we couldn't really get what we wanted from what we had, and we would have ended up spending the same amount of money."

The couple reached out to architect and *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner Michael Higgins after seeing a few other houses that he had designed. Known for his

functional floor plans and knack for creating elegant yet livable spaces—often in Spanish colonial, cottage or traditional styles—Higgins approached the challenge head-on, providing the owners with an axonometric projection of an unusual-shaped home. "I felt they wanted something a little different than the standard house," he says.

He was right. "We had talked about just using one of the designs Mike had already built and tinkering with it a bit, but then we knew that we wanted

to do something interesting," says the husband. "What's the point of hiring an architect if you're going to tell them what you want? You have to give them the license to be creative."

Higgins envisioned a classic farmhouse-style home on the pastoral lot, but instead of settling for a typical long, rectangular-shaped ranch, he devised a spacious, light-filled residence that, when viewed from above, is in the shape of a pair of adjoined H's resting side by side. "A lot of architects design U-shaped houses or even H-shaped houses, but I've never worked on one that has a double H," notes builder Tim Mann. The main spaces are divided into three "volumes"—living, kids'/guest rooms and garage/master suite—which form the letters' vertical stems, while the horizontal sections comprise such secondary spaces as powder rooms, storage and a lounge for the couple's daughters, ages 16 and 18.

Filling in the open spaces inside the letters are four outdoor rooms, each with its own purpose. "We wanted a lot of courtyards," says the husband, "and that was kind of the impetus behind the three volumes." For Higgins, one of the considerations driving the design was light. "It's more expansive to do an H-shaped house than it is to do a rectangle or a square. But it opens up more views and brings in more light. The shape allows for windows on three sides of most rooms," he points out.

The bright, airy abode comes in at 5,000 square feet, which is larger than the homeowners originally desired. "We didn't want to go that big," says the husband. "But in order to get the proportions right, we needed to go larger. Plus, we had to consider how it fit on the corner lot and where the garages would go. Proportionally, I think it looks right as opposed to just being a huge house that goes from side to side and takes up the entire yard."

When guests enter the home, they're immediately drawn from the foyer into the center volume, which encompasses—from front to back—the living room, dining room and kitchen, the former being separated from the latter two by a large double-sided fireplace. "It's interesting," notes the wife of the area's configuration. "If Mike had told me in words that when I would enter the house, the dining room would be right in my view, but that it would also



LEFT: Concrete tiles in a muted color palette delineate the home's entry and foyer. To the right is the dining room; the hallway on the left leads to the garage and master suite.



BELOW: Bold blue-and-red wallpaper combines with brass fixtures in a washroom located just off the entry. "It's pretty wild, but you almost need a big 'wow' when coming through the space," notes Foley.