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**Empty-nesters achieve their
'luxurious yet durable' dream home**

By Kathryn Loosli Pritchett
Photographs by David Duncan Livingston

After their children had grown, a retired couple in Tiburon decided to turn their family home into their dream house. They asked designer Ruth Livingston, who had worked with them on a previous remodeling project, to create a home that would be contemporary, understated, and easy to maintain.

The dining room opens into a gracious living room with a stunning view of San Francisco Bay. Ruth Livingston's 'crescent' sofas flank the Asian-inspired 'Sabra' table. Glass vessels by Oakland artist Terrill Waldman rest on the table.









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A stainless-steel cone curves out from the plain front of the limestone-topped maple vanity. 'I love to design things that defy logic,' says designer Ruth Livingston. Conical light fixtures echo the curve of the vanity front.

Left:

A curvy sofa covered in handwoven chenille wraps around a small circular table. The 'Dancing Dots' carpet is made from 100 percent Tibetan wool.

Her resulting design met their requests in an unexpectedly warm and inviting way." Given what they asked for, this could have been a heavy chrome and glass house," says Livingston. "But I lobbied for something that would be a little softer — and more unique."

Working with Sausalito architect Michael Rex, Livingston designed a lower-level addition of 1,500 square feet that includes a multipurpose family room, a media-exercise room, a study with an adjacent bath, a guest bedroom, and a large deck. The home had been a typical '60s ranch-style home with a lot of dark wood and outmoded carpeting. "Besides being out of date, the former home really didn't take advantage of the views," says Livingston. "So we rearranged the house to optimize the view as well as address the client's lifestyle."

The couple told Livingston that they preferred spaces that were light, spare and "almost sterile." But because this was a home that would primarily be just for them, they also wanted it to feel like a gracious retreat. And because they enjoy frequent visits from their children and grandchildren, they wanted the home to be both elegant and functional. "They wanted a luxurious but durable design — which is a contradiction in terms, of course," says Livingston. "But I always look at design as a solution to a challenge."

Accordingly, Livingston chose a sophisticated, monochromatic palette and executed it in upscale materials like light birch flooring and soft beige silk wall covering. However, she made certain that the wall covering was treated with a commercial grade finish so it wasn't too precious. She kept clutter to a minimum, so there were fewer objects to fuss over and protect; she also used lots of comfortable, inviting fabrics like chenille on the sofas. Wherever possible she incorporated curves in her design, to be more welcoming. For example, in the dining room, the "Wave Table" from Livingston's own furniture line features a dramatic swooping base inspired by ocean waves and sand dunes. The anigre veneer



Anigre veneer cabinets bow on either side of a round stainless-steel hood in the kitchen. Curved countertops and lower cabinet ends, as well as a round glass breakfast table and elliptical light fixture, soften the contemporary style of the kitchen.

Resource:

Ruth Livingston Studio
www.ruthlivingston.com

cabinets in the kitchen bow out on either side of a round stainless-steel hood. And a whimsical stainless steel cone (Livingston's favorite shape) swells at the front of a bathroom vanity. "A lot of curves take the hard edge off a contemporary design," says Livingston.

Throughout the house, Livingston used custom elements from local craftsmen and artists. The beautiful curly maple front door features glass panels, with motifs inspired by flax plants growing on the property, that were carved by San Rafael glass artist David Arnone. "I wanted to use nature motifs throughout the house," says Livingston. At the back

of the house, Oakland metal artist Kyle Reicher created 125 linear feet of deck railing made from stainless-steel mesh and bearing a dark olive green patina. "The color of the mesh allows it to blend with the environment, so it really becomes transparent," says Livingston. The same branch pattern that encloses the mesh was used vertically on an interior stairway made from powder-coated metal that would be impervious to little children's sticky fingers. "This design really combines all the elements I love in a home — it's full of things that are hand-crafted, elegant and comfortable," says Livingston. ■