

# Rowhouse revival

**By Kathryn Loosli Pritchett**  
**Photos by Ethan Kaplan**

WHEN ARCHITECT ALEX TERRY BOUGHT A SMALL HOME ON A NARROW HILLSIDE LOT IN SAN FRANCISCO, HE KNEW IT WOULD BE 'A TOTAL REBUILD.' THE ONE-BEDROOM HOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1907 AND HAD SUFFERED A NUMBER OF POORLY DONE REMODELS.

The backyard's proximity to the kitchen makes it a convenient place to dine as well as a beautiful area to look out on while preparing a meal. The low concrete wall provides extra seating when entertaining a larger crowd.







The Rumford-type fireplace design is particularly efficient; when a fire is lit it can warm the entire room.



Facing page: The concrete fireplace in the living room was cast in place during the construction of the home. Modern furnishings complement the spare design of the fireplace.

Right: The luminous quality of the bathroom is enhanced with a sandblasted glass countertop and mosaic glass tile walls.

Below: The windows were placed to frame the western view; sandblasted glass on the balcony and entry stairwell provides privacy from the street. The modern design sparked local interest during the construction in this neighborhood of (mostly) traditional Victorians, but has been well received. "This is a nice little gem in a very eclectic neighborhood," says Terry.



through multiple layers that allow ventilation between the skin and the underlying wall. "It's also really beautiful and ages well," says Terry. On the interior, Terry used cedar for the ceilings both for its beauty and to reference the exterior siding.

Inspired by traditional San Francisco rowhouse construction, Terry concentrated the glazing at the front and back of the house to direct the eye towards the views. The solid side walls of the home create privacy from the nearby neighbors. Stainless-steel details like the front entrance stairway, the kitchen countertops, a custom bathtub, and some

of the furniture that Terry designed for the house — including the master bed frame, designed as an engagement present for his wife, Colleen — add a sleek finishing touch to the design.

In the living room, a cast-in-place concrete Rumford-type fireplace serves as a dramatic focal point, while a ghostly floating staircase shimmers through a sandblasted glass panel. The ipe wood stairs lead to an "outdoor living room" — a rooftop terrace where the Terrys can find sunshine even in the winter.

The adjacent kitchen features cherry cabinets and 1/4-inch-thick stainless-steel countertops. Steel plate legs are topped



One of the pleasures of Terry's design is that the house is as inviting looking in from the yard as it is looking out.

with etched glass on the large table. Black basalt floor tile runs throughout the house and continues out on the back patio. "The kitchen was primarily designed with an eye to connecting to the outdoors," says Terry.

The master bedroom looks out over the garden and the master bath is filled with light from a large skylight overhead. Terry set an interior wall on an angle to maximize the amount of sunlight coming through the skylight. He also included a narrow window niche in the shower to provide more elbow room as well as ventilation and

light. "It's always hard to get enough natural light in a bathroom," says Terry. The luminous quality of the room is enhanced with a sandblasted glass countertop, mosaic glass wall tiles and a tub and sinks made out of stainless steel.

"The natural light throughout the house is very nice," says Terry. "It's been wonderful to experience it through the different seasons. That's one of the best parts about living in a project I designed rather than just walking away after everything was completed." ■