mid-century
modernized

The Terrys scooped out spaces on the existing house's rear elevation (see before photo, opposite, top right) to make way for a porch and a balcony. An expanded exterior stair (opposite, top left) becomes a funnel for natural light, and an ipe skin redefines both the rear and front (opposite, bottom) elevations.

most improved

According to architect Alex Terry, AIA, 1960s-era houses in San Francisco tend to share some common problems. "A lot of them are maxed out," he notes, referring to homes that are built right up to the property line. "They're quite large and boxy much of the time. It makes you think, maybe we could use some of this square footage for outside space."

That's exactly what he and his brother and business partner Ivan Terry did at this remodel of a bland 1963 house in the city's Noe Valley neighborhood. The original building had a cluttered, confusing floor plan that took no notice of available views and provided little access to the outdoors. With their client's blessing, the Terrys opted to gut the interiors, keeping the home's shell and floor structure. They shifted the public areas to the north end of the top floor and opened up that level, the better to take in San Francisco's justly famous scenery. And they removed volumes on the back of the house, replacing them with a balcony and a terrace that connect the 2,300-square-foot house with its formerly neglected yard. "We actually made the new footprint smaller, to get the outdoor space," Alex Terry explains. "We made it a tube instead of a box."

A dark outdoor entry stair was enlarged to form a pocket of light and air in the center of the house. Alternatively, the owners can reach the main floor via a new, skylit interior stair entered at the garden level. Along with the outdoor rooms and the bounty of glass on the rear, north-facing wall, the brothers used an additional passive cooling strategy: a double exterior wall. They designed the home's ipe cladding to sit 3/16 of an inch away from the structural wall, creating an air gap. When

project: Choy Residence, San Francisco
architect: Terry & Terry Architecture, Berkeley, Calif.
general contractor: Quick Connect Construction, San Rafael, Calif.
structural engineer: Santos & Urrutia Structural Engineers, San Francisco
project size: 2,500 square feet (before), 2,300 square feet (after)
site size: 0.07 acre
construction cost: withheld
photography: Ethan Kaplan Photography

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The home's newly established ties to the outdoors affect each and every space. A top-floor skylight pulls natural light into the interior stairwell (right), while generous windows allow for daylight and views in spaces such as the kitchen/dining/living room (opposite) and the master bath (below). The designers created a sense of continuity by bringing the ipe siding inside the house. "Ipe is a very durable material," says architect Alex Terry. "It will last 30 years or so."

sunshine warms the ipe, the hot air that results dissipates up through the gap, rather than transferring directly to the house.

The client hopes to generate power on site in the future, so the Terrys and builder Perry Fong included as much infrastructure as they could. They angled the roof slightly and built in conduits and mounts to prepare it for the eventual installation of 56-inch-by-25-inch solar panels. And they ran a drain from the roof to the basement to facilitate future rainwater collection for garden irrigation.

A steel moment frame strengthens the back portion of the house, which didn't meet code before the renovation. With this structural reinforcement, as well as a newly durable skin, forward-thinking eco-features, and calm interior spaces, the once-throwaway building has evolved into a bastion of permanence.—*m.d.*

performance upgrades

- Increased daylighting and natural ventilation
- Double exterior wall for passive cooling
- Overhangs to protect against wind and sun
- Rainwater collection and solar panel infrastructure in place
- High-efficiency water heater and furnace
- Reuse of majority of existing structure