

AS SEEN IN
UTAH
STYLE
& DESIGN



The main hallway leads from the great room into the spacious entry. Double, glass-paned doors opening to the aligned living and dining rooms invite light to flow into the wide passageway.

RIGHT: The Nielsons' home faces due west, overlooking the Salt Lake valley. Architect Warren Lloyd positioned the home to take advantage of the scenic setting and to capture the unobstructed views.

clean sweep

FRESH ARCHITECTURE AND COLORS ENLIVEN AN ACTIVE FAMILY HOME

BY MELISSA FIELDS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOT ZIMMERMAN





WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGN,

who says that family and fabulous don't mix? Who says that contemporary can't be comfortable, the best way to renew is to buy new, or that building a home should take years to complete? Certainly not Chris or Heidi Nielson. They rejected all of these ideas when they decided to create a larger home for their active clan.

Eschewing a path typical of many burgeoning families—moving into a large house as a couple and then filling it with kids—the Nielsons' biggest priority when purchasing a Salt Lake Country Club-area rambler 10 years ago was location. "We really liked how the house was pretty much in the city, but tucked away on a street most people don't know is there," Chris says. It wasn't long before the home was literally bursting at the seams with six children, ages 7 to 19, and the Nielsons knew they had to make a change. Leaving the neighborhood they had come to love, however, was not an option. "Our neighbors are the best," Heidi says. "I just couldn't imagine living anywhere else."

So, in mid-summer 2005, the Nielsons embarked on a complete rebuild. They replaced the rambler with a new home designed to accommodate the children's active lives and satisfy the couple's fondness for clean, contemporary design. The result is a sophisticated, modern abode filled with light, soothing color, and inviting common areas where the family entertains, relaxes, and finds respite with one another.

The process began with Keith Bennett of KCB Architecture. A long-time friend and associate of the Nielsons, he laid out the original floor plan. The Nielsons then enlisted the help of architect Warren Lloyd, AIA, to design the remodel. He came highly recommended. "Warren designed a home for our friends in Seattle. I loved how that house seemed so at home with its coastal landscape," Heidi says.

Lloyd began by altering the orientation of the Nielsons' home to face due west, taking advantage of the lot's valley views and maximizing one of the home's key features—natural light. Rooms, windows, and doorways

ABOVE LEFT: Chris and Heidi Nielson sit at the base of the unique staircase that welcomes guests as they enter the home.

BELOW LEFT: Architect Warren Lloyd created relatively small bedrooms and private spaces, allocating more of the home's spatial budget to common areas like this spacious landing and sunny sitting area located on the second floor.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The cathedral ceilings, sky-blue walls, and a metal railing framing transparent panels make stunning statements in the main entry hall. A pair of maize-colored armchairs and a simple side table create a distinctive focal point.





Neutral tones, natural materials, and varied textures soften and temper the bright colors featured throughout the home. A dark leather club chair and coffee table ground the pastel blues and vivid greens in the great room sitting area.

OPPOSITE TOP: The oversized kitchen island is where the Nielson children gather to do homework, chat, and snack. Here (left to right) Sam, Annie, and Nick, watch their brother Critter sample their mom's pasta salad.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM LEFT: A Louis Poulsen Artichoke chandelier helps define the dining room's modern look.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM RIGHT: Eight-foot-tall windows allow natural light and scenic views to fill the great room.



throughout the main floor are aligned, allowing for uninterrupted sight lines and for the light to flow from room to room. From the foyer, one can look down the main hall, past double-door openings into the living and dining rooms, and see into the kitchen and great room. Here, broad vistas of the Salt Lake Valley to the Oquirrh Mountains illuminate the space. "Alignment of rooms is really an old notion," Lloyd says. "You see this in places like Catherine's Palace near St. Petersburg, Russia, where the alignment of windows and doors allow for transparency through a space."

To complement the light-filled architecture, the Nielsons knew they wanted clean-lined, modern design, but it wasn't until they met designer Susan Taggart that a tangible vision for the home's interior design scheme came to life. "We really just let Susan lead us where we wanted to go," Heidi says.

Taggart introduced the home's modern coastal theme in the foyer, where soothing blue and taupe walls dress the spacious two-story entry. Like pieces of art, transparent, reed-encasing panels frame the slightly curved stairway as it ascends to the upper level landing and cathedral ceiling. "I wanted the entryway to take to your breath away, to be fresh and surprising," Taggart says. The only furnishings in this light-filled space are a pair of maize-colored, cubic armchairs and a simple, round side table. A multiple-cylinder chandelier dangles from the ceiling high above.

The foyer's serene, distinctly modern atmosphere continues throughout the main floor. Wooden, glass-paned doors—stained rich dark brown to enhance the home's clean lines—open to the formal dining room off the main hall. Taggart furnished this space with a simple dining table and chairs, allowing the room's most striking piece—a Louis Poulsen original Artichoke chandelier—to take center stage. "Clients often ask whether they will tire quickly of modern design, because it doesn't seem to have as much of a history as other popular trends like French Country or Old World design themes," says Taggart. "I think that its timelessness is proven, and that its cleanliness, simplicity, and function are actually easier to live with and enjoy over time."

The hall ends as it opens to the great room—a cheerful, apple green space where the kitchen, casual dining area, and living room colorfully co-exist. Clean lines and lively hues punctuate the space. Royal blue canisters line up along an open shelf in the striking kitchen, while a baby blue sofa and side chairs play off the sitting area's brown leather club chair and ottoman. "Neutrals mixed in with brighter colors keep things calm and keep the design from becoming too saturated," Taggart says.

Heidi enjoys the vistas from the library located on the second floor. The space features bright turquoise shelving, a rose-red Womb chair, and iridescent fireplace tile that help make this one of the most cherished and visually charged rooms in the home.



Though not a mandate from the homeowners, both Taggart and Lloyd incorporated several environmentally sensitive elements into the home's design. Bamboo floors run throughout the main and upper levels, recycled carpeting enriches the lower level, and many fully recyclable materials flow throughout the house. "Green materials just seem to readily lend themselves to a modern design," Lloyd says.

The main level's color, luminosity, and spaciousness are also at home on the second floor and lower level, even though the lower level sits 80 percent underground. Upstairs, the kids' bedrooms are small leaving more space for common areas, placing an emphasis on interaction over seclusion. The four older boys' bedrooms all open to a shared study area that encourages contact between the kids and allows Heidi and Chris to monitor Internet usage without being intrusive. The master suite's sitting area is Chris' preferred spot to watch the nightly news and 10-year-old Jack's favorite place for one-on-one time with mom and dad.

The lower level pays homage to the day-to-day lives of this dynamic family. There, a game room, basketball court, and video game/chill-out room—christened by the children as "the freezer"—establish the Nielson home as a favorite neighborhood hangout. Other lower-level rooms include a home gym and a "Costco room" used for storing bulk food purchases from the family's weekly trip to the market.

For many, the most amazing thing about the Nielson home is the short time frame in which the team completed this extensive rebuild. Chris, who hired Steve Taylor of Spectrum Dynamics to help with the project, was able to devote personal time and energy to the project after he'd wrapped up other jobs with his building company, Evergreene Construction. The Nielsons had established mid-December as the deadline for completion. As this target date approached, Chris and Heidi began offering daily lunches on site, facilitating meetings and communication between the project's various subcontractors. Chris also placed a lit Christmas tree out on the deck. "I told everyone that whatever else happened, I'd be moving that tree along with my family into the house for Christmas." Sure enough, on December 22—just six months after removal of the original rambler began—Chris moved both the tree and his large family in. Today, he shrugs his shoulders about this accomplishment. To both Chris and Heidi, it was fate. Timetable included, their colorful, contemporary, fun-loving family home was simply meant to be. ■

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: The Nielsons wanted the home to encourage their family to come together, rather than retreat to their own spaces. The second-floor study—a space that might otherwise be a simple hallway—provides a place for the four older boys to hang out and do school work together.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT: Double doors lead from the master bedroom's sitting area and frame upper level views of the home's unique staircase railing and stunning chandelier.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT: Serene colors, a glass shower door, iridescent tiles, and a large sunny window help create a spa-like sanctuary in the master bathroom.



SPACE AUTHORITY

Where do you get the space to put an eight-bedroom home where a five-bedroom house once stood, particularly in a neighborhood with covenants forbidding three-story structures? "You visually expand the space by keeping lines clean and simple, and allowing in lots of light," says Warren Lloyd, AIA, principal of the Salt Lake City and Seattle-based Lloyd Architects. His other space-making strategies included:

- Taking full advantage of the site's orientation with the placement of 8-foot-tall windows all along the west side of the home. But rather than simply installing a wall of glass, Lloyd chose panes with larger-than-normal divisions. "The large divisions are more effective at making a space seem bigger than one large pane," Lloyd says.
- Choosing smooth finishes, minimal window treatments, transparent fixtures, and wall-to-wall bamboo flooring that maintain uninterrupted lines and broaden the space.
- Using an economical hand when sizing the bedrooms, providing more space for common areas like the children's study, stairway landing area, and library.
- Selecting furnishings that work in concert with the home's open architecture. Many of the sofas and chairs chosen by team-member Susan Taggart feature exposed legs (versus skirts), allowing light to flow through. Accessories are minimal, and most rooms include just one contrasting piece to create a bold focal point. "Cluttering a space with unnecessary furnishings is the quickest way to make a home feel smaller," Lloyd says.

