

U-T SAN DIEGO

# Coastal

SAN DIEGO HOMES



## SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

ARCHITECT MODERNIZES HOME WITH ANCIENT TECHNIQUES

OCTOBER 2013

# TRADITIONAL, YET MODERN

## ARCHITECT USES ANCIENT TECHNIQUES OF THE MIDDLE EAST TO UPDATE LA JOLLA HOME

MARTINA SCHIMITSCHEK

SPECIAL TO THE U-T

**W**ith a playful mix of geometric lines and a thoughtful combination of passive energy designs, Simi Razavian's La Jolla home is contemporary in both style and sustainability.

But Razavian, the principle architect at MSA & Associates, didn't look at the latest green technologies to update her family's 1950s ranch home, but rather the ancient traditions of her homeland, Iran.

"The house was too hot in summer and too cold in winter. And there were no windows opening to the south," said Razavian, a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional (LEED AP). And with only 8-foot-high ceilings, the rooms in the 2,000-square-foot home were small and dark.

Her solution was to redesign the

home to make the most out of natural elements such as light, wind, sun and shade – traditional techniques used in the Middle Eastern deserts for centuries.

Leaving the outside walls and the roof in place, Razavian opened the interior by adding cross ventilation wherever possible.

"Cross ventilation is a major issue for me," she said. With the cooling ocean breeze, there's no need for air conditioning.

To further increase circulation, Razavian removed the low ceilings in the living and dining area and in an office, replacing them with vaulted ceilings and exposed beams.

In the kitchen, the ceiling remained, but the floor was lowered to provide extra height. The wall between the kitchen and the family room came down, and the corner of

SEE LA JOLLA • 6



Architect Simi Razavian designs multifunctional spaces and elements, such as this water feature, which serves as a spa, a fountain and a bench for extra seating. JIM BRADY

## COASTAL SAN DIEGO HOMES



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Decades of alterations stripped to restore 1913 English Arts and Crafts-style home in Mission Hills.

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Cozy, contemporary feel flows from inside of Encinitas home to outside.

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Owner of Buena Vista Creek Valley adobe preserves rich family tapestry.

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Organic design results in seamless blend of waterfall pool, mature landscaping, other outdoor spaces.

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**Large picture windows facing the private front yard and an open beam ceiling create a sense of spaciousness in the living room. "I enjoy being home," Razavian said. "There is so much greenery, it doesn't feel claustrophobic."**

## La Jolla

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the house where two the rooms meet is now open to the backyard with sliding glass pockets doors opening away from the corner.

That corner faces south, Razavian said, which allows the ocean breeze to cool the room in summer and the winter sun to warm the French beaumaniere limestone tiles, providing thermal heat. The cement patio is flush with the floor making the indoor-outdoor transition seamless. Outside, five umbrellas, which can be anchored in holes in the cement, provide shade in the summer as well as privacy from the neighbors.

A gracefully curved pool is designed as a bench, a whirlpool spa and a fountain. The arch of water leads the eye to the round fire pit, which is surrounded by five concrete cylinders for seating.

An oversized gutter of galvanized metal painted with a copper patina hides the roof's asphalt shingles. "It gives it a Frank Lloyd Wright look," Razavian said. "Little things such as this can effectively mask existing ugly features without costing too much.

"We wanted to put our money where it shows, where we can enjoy it the most."

Inside, each room has a distinct personality. Large picture windows in the living room face a private

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**The master bathroom, a balance of practical design and luxurious touches, was added to the back of the home. JIM BRADY PHOTOS**



**The combination of bird's eye maple and cherry woods brings out the geometric lines of the kitchen. The lively design includes a three-tiered island with workspaces, sitting areas and a top level for flowers. JIM BRADY**

## La Jolla

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front courtyard. Because the home faces a busy street, the windows facing the front are constructed with thick glass, and the windows used for cross ventilation are on the side of the house.

Cove lighting floods the living area with a warm light. A round mantle and façade was added to the existing fireplace breaking up the straight lines of the room. Niches in the dining area wall are a nod to traditional adobe buildings. Each niche has its own light and color to create a vibrant wall display.

A combination of light bird's eye

maple and cherry woods in the kitchen accentuates the geometry of the cupboards and island. "I love both (woods) and couldn't choose between the two," Razavian said. "I also thought using only one kind would be too boring."

Counters are topped with black galaxy granite, which is very dense and easily cleaned. The multilevel island is the "working, eating, preparing" area, Razavian said. Two higher levels for standing include a sink for washing fruits and vegetables only, while two lower levels have counter seating. The top level, a small rectangle in the middle, is where Razavian's flowers go. There, they are out of the way yet everyone can see them.

Four types of lighting – wall sconces,

pendant lights and recessed and direct lights – add to the dynamics of the room. "They all create their own mood," Razavian said.

The remodel, which was completed in 2007, included a new master bathroom and three-car garage, adding 600 square feet to the original home. The three-car garage, designed so part of it could be an office, was built at the rear of the property. The master bathroom, along with a sleeping loft and bathroom in the children's/guest room (her two sons are grown), was built in the space between the end of the original home and the garage.

The original garage was converted into an office for Razavian's husband, who is a structural engineer. The office's angled roof lines and

clerestory windows were based on the lines of glass inset into massive walnut wood doors used for the alley entrance to the property. They were salvaged from a construction site. Like the house, the office uses cross ventilation to keep it cool, while the clerestory windows inundate the space with natural light while keeping it private.

"People think you have to start all over to have a good house," Razavian said. "You don't have to tear it all down."

The key is a good design and practical solutions.

"I don't have any wasted space," she said.

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