

Foundation trouble gives Houston couple a fresh start

By **Alyson Ward** Updated 1:01 pm, Monday, April 4, 2016

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AFTER:

The Minyards kept much of their furniture in the redesign, including a sofa and two lounge chairs. The chairs, covered in a brown floral fabric, were reupholstered to fit the home's cool palette.

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When a fault line split the foundation beneath their garage, Laurie and **Adam Chunn** knew they were in for serious construction work: They'd need to tear down the two-car garage and start over.

But while they were planning the teardown, the west Houston couple got an idea: Why not build an apartment above the new garage?

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The house had four bedrooms and 4,000 square feet, but adding the apartment was a practical matter for this family of four. A couple of times a year, **Laurie Chunn**'s parents come to visit for a few weeks at a time, and Adam Chunn has eight siblings, some of whom have several kids. Their families need space when they visit, and "our one guest bedroom wasn't cutting it," Laurie Chunn says.

The couple's builder, Wamhoff Design&Build, put them in touch with designer **Erika Barczak** at By Design Interiors. Barczak helped them create a tidy, one-bedroom apartment with its own exterior entrance, a wrought-iron spiral staircase in the backyard.

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"Then we decided we should redo the kitchen while we're at it," Laurie Chunn says. Now, more than a year later, they have transformed their closed-up house into an open, bright space that better suits their lifestyle.

For a small space, the new apartment has plenty of room. A double bed fills the bedroom, which connects to a bright and open bathroom with a walk-in shower. In the living room, a window seat that holds a twin-size mattress, offering one more bed for visitors.

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The Chunns have two daughters, ages 9 and 4. When the 9-year-old has sleepovers, Laurie Chunn says, "they like to sleep in the apartment. They think it's so cool."

A kitchen hugs one corner of the main living area; it's outfitted with efficiency-size versions of the major appliances,

including a refrigerator, an oven, a microwave and a dishwasher. Built-in shelves and drawers offer storage without taking up floor space. And just outside the apartment is a roomy wooden deck, where guests can sit outside and look out over the backyard. When her family comes to visit, Laurie Chunn says, "my parents really like to sit out here and drink coffee in the morning."

The extra room has become valuable to the couple and to their guests, Adam Chunn says. "Having a space like this makes visitors feel less intrusive," he says. "That's always the thing: 'Am I imposing?' If you have a place they can kind of keep to themselves, it makes it a lot easier."

The apartment connects to the rest of the house with a wide hallway, which has hickory floors and a wall of built-in shelves. This is where Adam Chunn keeps his board games. Dozens of boxes line up neatly on the shelves: "Istanbul," "7 Wonders," "Codenames," "Alhambra." He has several friends over every Wednesday for a game night.

"These were all stacked up in big piles," Adam Chunn says, pulling out of the games. "Then they put these shelves up, and poor Laurie" - they both laugh - "I don't know what she was planning for these shelves, but I claimed them for my board games."

Down on the first floor, the kitchen was just as important as the apartment. The Chunns like to entertain, and their chopped-up space had never felt quite right.

The kitchen, breakfast nook and dining room of their 1976 house were walled off from the main living room, which felt "cavelike" and dark, Adam Chunn says.

"This breakfast area was so removed from everything else, we never used it, so it was just wasted space," he says. "We basically had three rooms, one of which was almost useless."

The answer: Open it up. They took out a few walls and a fireplace, making the closed-up first floor feel spacious and bright. And Barczak helped them make the kitchen modern and fun, with bright colors and more room to move around. She chose a penny round tile in greenish blue for the backsplash, then added a panel of textured white tiles behind the stove.

Adam Chunn is the cook in the family, so the layout was important to him.

"I'm a potluck cooker; I like to make things up as I go along," he says. He gets inspired by looking at his large array of spices and seasonings, so he didn't want those to be tucked away behind a cabinet door.

"He wanted to see his stuff - but then, they wanted a clean kitchen," Barczak says. She opted to put in open shelves for spices near the stove, where spices are visible but out of the way, not cluttering the counter.

Built-in cabinets have glass doors so the Chunns can display their collection of Fiestaware. A kitchen island has storage for appliances, but it also has wheels and can be moved out of the way when necessary. The Chunns chose a soapstone counter and sleek, industrial light fixtures. Their breakfast nook has a built-in banquette and a white,

lacquered circular table that looks thoroughly modern.

"The original house is not a modern space at all," Laurie Chunn says. "It was kind of a challenge to put a modern kitchen in." With the new open floor plan, the look works. And the room has enough traditional touches - the farmhouse sink, the hickory floors - to make the space blend with the rest of the house.

The Chunns had plenty of ideas, Barczak says, so there was no guesswork involved in the design.

"They had really thought about the way they lived in their house," she says. "It was easy to come up with solutions for them."

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