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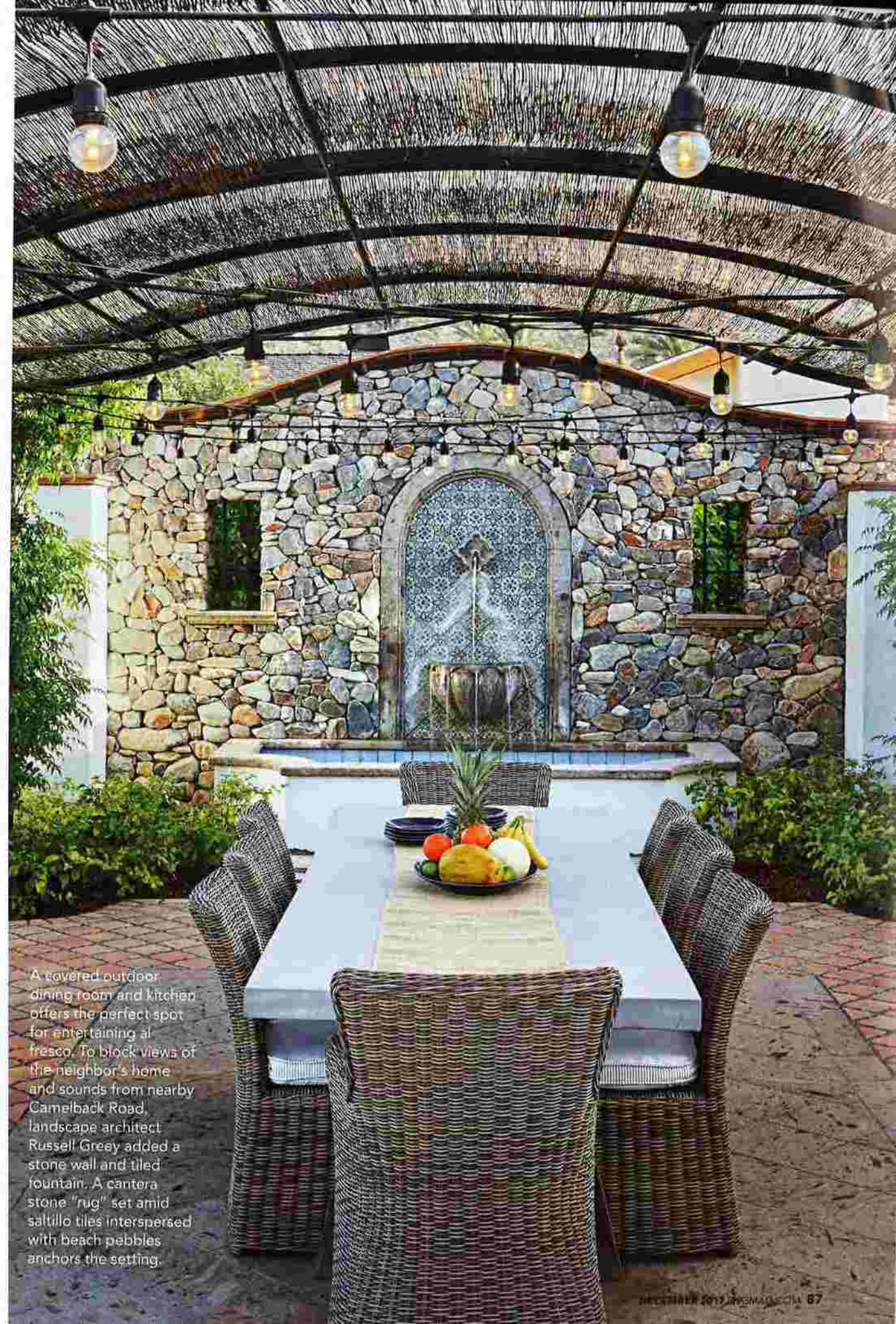
# Vision of the Past

A Newly Built Home Recalls Arcadia's Elegant History While Offering Amenities Befitting a Modern Family

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT SANDLER AND DAVID MOORE



Arcadia's front porch living is one of the features that attracted the homeowners to the neighborhood. Architect Michael Higgins designed a cozy seating area with a fireplace on the east side of the house. The red brick patio complements the clay roof tiles.



A covered outdoor dining room and kitchen offers the perfect spot for entertaining al fresco. To block views of the neighbor's home and sounds from nearby Camelback Road, landscape architect Russell Greay added a stone wall and tiled fountain. A cantera stone "rug" set amid saltillo tiles interspersed with beach pebbles anchors the setting.





In the first half of the 20th century, the neighborhood in eastern Phoenix along Camelback Road flourished with citrus groves. The colorful fruit and delicate blossoms of orange, lemon and grapefruit trees perfumed the air, while lush lawns imparted an atmosphere of bucolic refuge amid the Valley's desert surroundings. Known as Arcadia, the area attracted the attention of well-heeled homeowners who built stately manors characterized by smooth stucco walls, clay tile roofs, front porches, colorful tile accents and decorative iron trim. Two famous examples that still stand today are the former summer home of industrialist Delos Willard Cooke, converted in 1948 into the famed Royal Palms Resort, and the estate of Amanda Blake, best known for her role as Miss Kitty on TV's "Gunsmoke."

As the years passed, the citrus groves were replaced with private properties, and the archetypal architecture was overshadowed by an influx of trendy Tuscan and minimalist modern dwellings. For one homebuyer, though, the enticing appeal of a quintessential Old Phoenix residence was enough to convince him and his wife to swap their contemporary, urban condo for Arcadia's vast, verdant landscapes.

"To me, the Santa Barbara look has never gone out of style. It's timeless," he says. "We were condo dwellers our whole lives together, so we were excited to find a home to begin growing our family as well as a place for our dogs to enjoy."

The couple purchased a 1970s-era Spanish colonial revival-style house on a large lot just steps from Camelback Road with the intention of updating the structure and grounds. What they ended up with, however, was a brand new stylish abode that pays homage to the neighborhood's early aesthetics.

"Originally, we were just going to do a renovation, and that was it. But then it snowballed," explains the homeowner. "The big thing for us



**OPPOSITE TOP:** A large mesquite tree in the front yard—along with another in the backyard—is the only feature from the original property that remains. It stands in its original location, which was in the center of a circular driveway. Higgins oriented the new home's floorplan to face east-west and brought it closer to the street. Greey accentuated the tree with a raised bed of DC Ranch cobblestone. Cantera stone pavers lead across the yard, connecting the driveway to the front walkway. "It's pretty much an ornamental Old Arizona landscape," says Greey of his design.

**OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** "People often forget how nice the back of the house can look," says Higgins. The view from the ramada emphasizes the terraced landscape and vast lawn created by the redesign, as well as the home's many covered patios, private courtyards and open archways.



French doors lead from the wife's office to an intimate courtyard, where a custom tile mural of an orange tree and Camelback Mountain is displayed. At the center of the patio, which is covered in cantera stone pavers surrounded by clover, is a crepe myrtle tree that blossoms in brilliant shades of pink and red.



Santa Barbara architecture is very understated,

so you want a sophisticated garden.

—Russell Greey, landscape architect



A pair of date palms flank the ramada and draw the eye toward its archway, which reflects in the pool and creates a dramatic full-circle image. Ground-level cantera stone decking gives the pool a European feel. To the right of the pool, steps lead to a terraced lawn where the owners hope to soon build a guest casita.





The great room, with its vaulted ceiling accentuated by decorative beams, has a "modern, open floor plan," says Higgins. "You feel like you're in total command of everything when you're in this room." Biparting glass window wall doors slide to reveal a 12-foot opening that leads to a covered seating area. A staircase brings guests to the pool, which is oriented perpendicular to the house. "You see more water that way," says the architect.



French doors open the formal dining room to the front porch seating area. "It's important to attach rooms to the outside and to give people that access to indoor/outdoor living," says Higgins.

was that we wanted to raise the ceiling height, but the house had premanufactured trusses, which involves pretty much taking off the roof. So between that and moving walls around, I reached a point where I thought, 'you know what, I'm just going to level the house.'

Once the first house was out of the way, architect Michael Higgins was able to get a better perspective of the home's orientation, which at the time did not take full advantage of the large lot and jaw-dropping vistas of Camelback Mountain. Situated on a cul de sac, the house was angled diagonally to the southwest so that its backyard patios and pool area faced away from the mountains, while the expansive front yard was taken up by a large circular drive. "It's a good thing the homeowners decided to eliminate the house because now it faces directly east-west, and the backyard has opened up to these great mountain views," says the *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award winner.

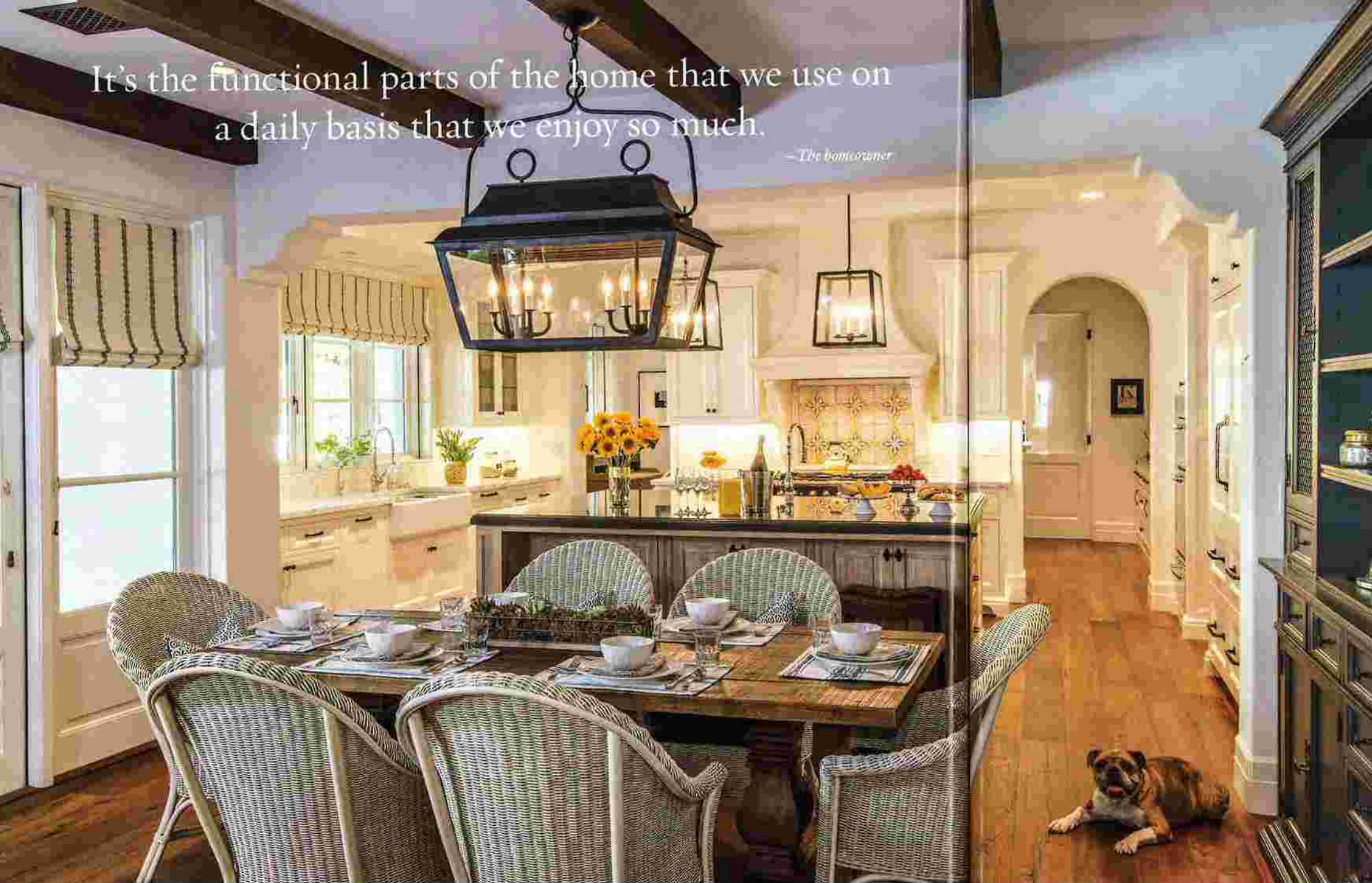
As fans of the Santa Barbara style, the couple chose to work with Higgins, who is well-known for his classic designs, after spotting a similar-looking home of his in the neighborhood. "Spanish colonial and Santa Barbara are great styles for Arizona, and they're the first historical styles in the area," says the architect. The 5,000-square-foot single-story house features a bevy of traditional touches, including crisp white walls, red roof tiles and red brick walkways, colorful window frames, Spanish tile accents and copious ironwork. Cupolas with clerestory windows that bring light to the interiors are a nod to the region's agricultural heritage.

Inside, the decor in soft shades of beige, blue and yellow is unassuming, warm and fit for sophisticated adults,



It's the functional parts of the home that we use on a daily basis that we enjoy so much.

— The homeowners



**RIGHT:** One of the couple's favorite spaces is the bright, spacious laundry room that doubles as the dogs' retreat. Custom cabinets hide cold storage for pet food and a dishwasher for bowls. A Dutch door allows in fresh air while keeping the pups inside. It opens to a vertical garden filled with potato vine (*Solanum jasminoides*). "It goes crazy in the summer," says Greey about the desert-hardy blooms.



**ABOVE:** A mixture of corbeled and circle arches separate the kitchen from the breakfast room and lead to a mudroom, playroom, storage pantry and butler's pantry. The couple's dog Cassidy rests on the pet-friendly wood floors.

**TOP RIGHT:** A main feature of the kitchen is a dormer window above the oversized island. A signature of Higgins' work, the raised feature, "brings in lots of natural light from a high recess inside the space, while the wood beams stop your eye," says the architect.

**RIGHT:** The butler's pantry connects the kitchen to the front entertaining patio.





**ABOVE:** "We didn't want a grandiose master bedroom, because we don't spend a lot of time in there," says the husband. Muted shades of blue and taupe combine with natural materials and textures for an elegant and tranquil look. French doors open to a private patio that's ideal for reading the paper and enjoying a morning coffee.

**TOP LEFT:** Soft gray cabinets and paneling, white sinks, nickel-plated fixtures and white Carrara marble countertops turn the master bath into a sophisticated retreat. An arched door separates his and hers vanities and opens to the master suite hallway.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** A slipper tub rests beneath a large picture window in the master bath. The floors are gray marble. Hedges just outside the window offer privacy from a neighboring house. "We love our master suite," says the husband. "It's so roomy and comfortable."

energetic toddlers and playful pups, alike. "Our hardwood floors are indestructible," says the homeowner with a laugh. "It's just a comfortable house; it doesn't seem grandiose in anyway."

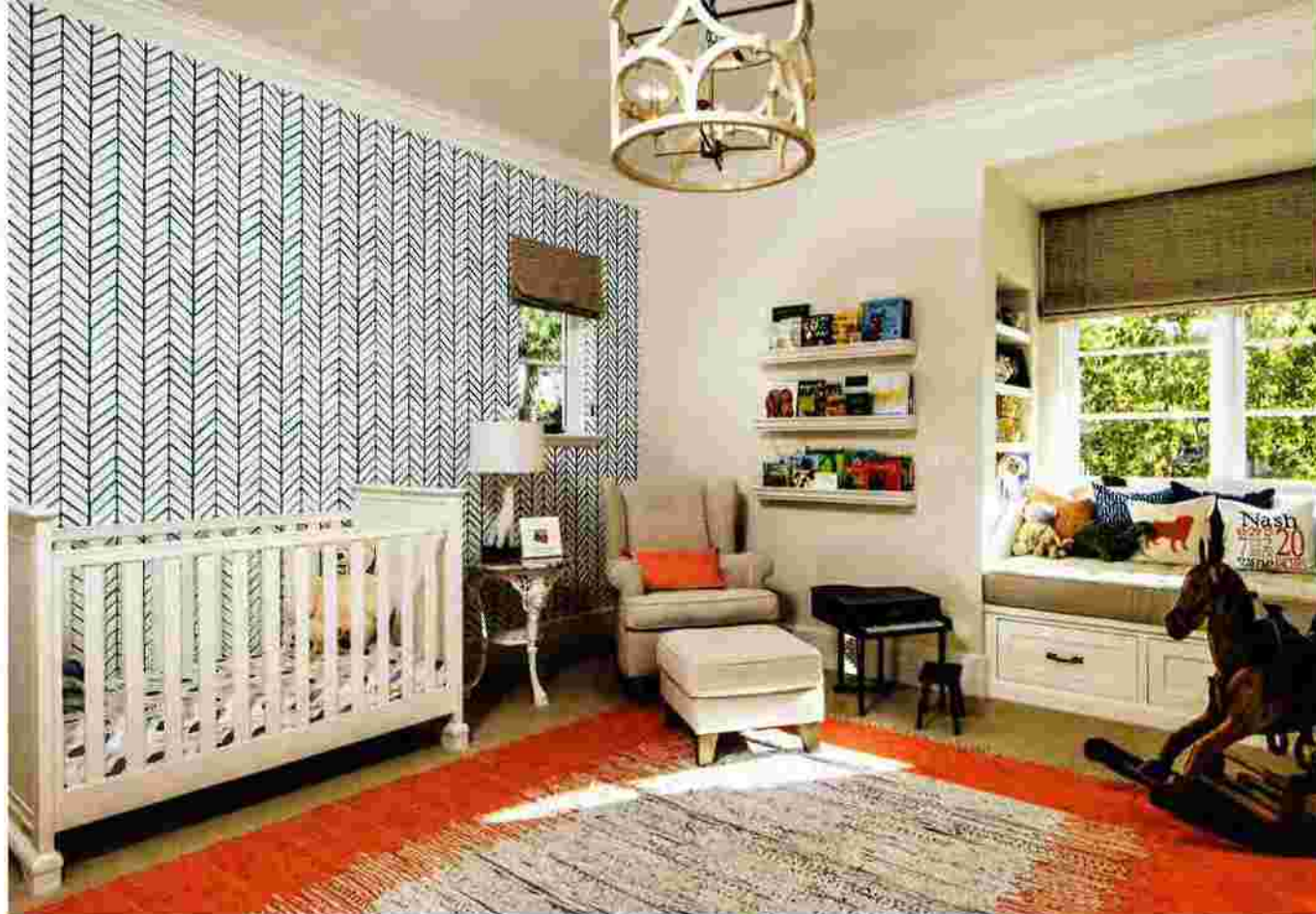
As if to emphasize his low-key approach to single-family living, the homeowner points out his favorite indoor spaces: the laundry room and the butler's pantry. "In condos, laundry rooms are these tiny places barely big enough to fit a washer and dryer, so we wanted a comfortable space where we could do laundry, but it also needed to double as the dog room," he says of the oversized area outfitted with custom cabinetry and decorative floor tiles. "It has a dog shower, a little fridge and freezer just for their food, a dishwasher for their bowls—everything they need is in that room." Dutch doors on both ends allow the couple to easily access fresh air while washing and folding or enclose the dogs inside when needed.

Another Dutch door leads from the butler's pantry to an outdoor seating and fireplace area at the front of the

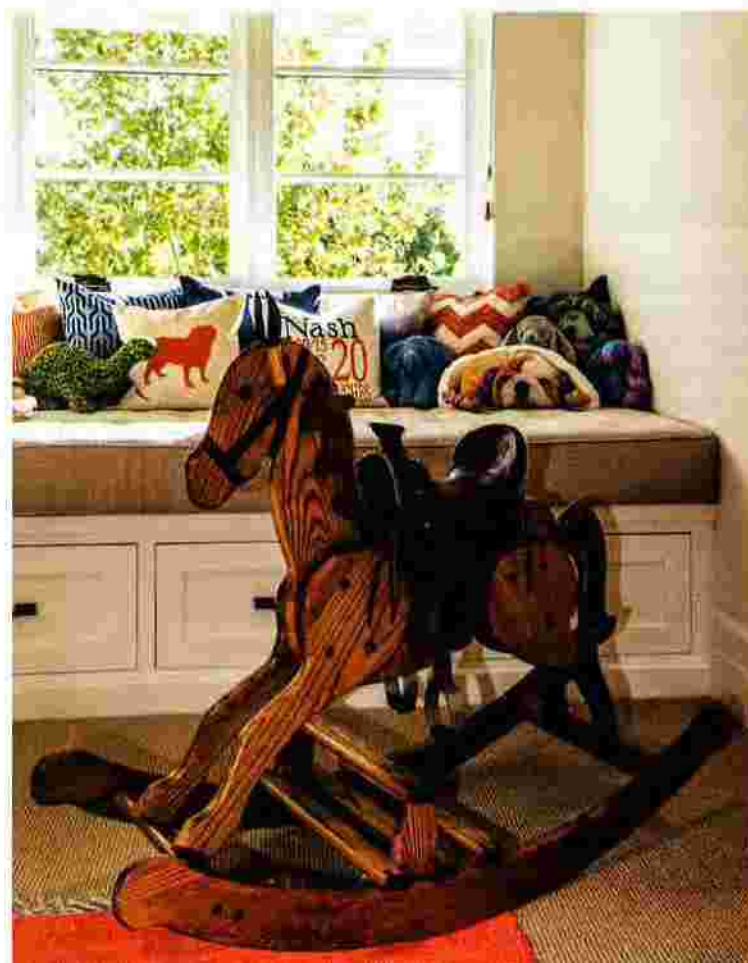
house. The narrow yet well-equipped room connects the front porch to the kitchen and serves as a wet bar, complete with sink, dishwasher, ample storage for beverages and a wine refrigerator. "If you're entertaining outside and your drink runs out, you can step in here and refill it. You don't have to circulate through the house," says Higgins. "Front yard living is a big part of the Arcadia lifestyle, and on a home that faces east, the front porch is a great place to be in the warmer months."

But for most guests, it's the backyard that elicits the loudest "wows." Tearing down the old house and reorienting the new one allowed Higgins and *Phoenix Home & Garden* Masters of the Southwest award-winning landscape architect Russell Greey to dramatically alter the landscape. By rotating the foundation for direct east-west exposures on the large rectangular lot, Higgins was able to bring the house closer to the road, resulting in a more expansive backyard and distinct entertainment zones. The old amoeba-shaped pool was removed, and a





About a year after moving in, the homeowners welcomed their first child. The nursery is large enough to grow with him and offers plenty of natural light, thanks to a picture window above a window seat. Sized to accommodate a twin mattress, with storage drawers below, the nook features built-in shelves for books and toys. The wood rocking horse (below) was hand-built for the homeowners by a work acquaintance of the husband's. The leather saddle, also handmade, is a miniature version of a real saddle.



glamorous European-inspired rectangular pool that sits low in the grass and perpendicular to the house and is bordered on the far end by a clay tile-roofed ramada now anchors the yard. "The ramada has a half-circle arch that reflects as a full circle in the water, which is kind of fun," notes Higgins.

On the north edge of the yard, Greey added an outdoor kitchen and dining room covered by a camel-arched wrought iron arbor and bamboo shades. A stone wall with a matching camel arch blocks views of the neighboring house, while the gentle burble of a cantera fountain minimizes noise from nearby Camelback Road. "We entertain a lot, so it's nice to have a great outdoor dining area with a pizza oven," says the homeowner. "We've become known for our pizza parties."

But just like with the interiors, it's not the showstoppers that the couple cherish. Tucked away in an intimate courtyard just outside the wife's office is a tile mural of an orange tree. "We were married at the Royal Palms, and there's a similar mural there," says the husband. "We had the tiles custom-painted for us, and the designers added an extra touch with Camelback Mountain in the background, so it really holds a special place in our hearts."

"Building a home is such a rewarding process," he adds. "A lot of folks just toss up whatever's in style, but to design and build a really special place takes a lot of work. But it's so rewarding to do, and it's something you can be proud of." ■



Bleached wood accents and furnishings and decor in soft blues, creams and yellows give the wife's office a relaxing, feminine feel. Behind her desk, a bulletin board displays monthly photos of the couple's son. It's flanked by a series of images of their dog Harley taken with table numbers from their wedding. French doors open to a private courtyard.

*See Sources.*