



# Blueprint #9

*A practical and sturdy but lackluster house steps into the limelight with a dynamic and affordable redo.*



# Rambler Redux

Seattle, Washington

**Cost of Remodel:** \$100,000 in 1998

**Architects:** Julie Campbell and Buzz Tenenbom,  
CTA Design Builders

**"Before" Photographs:** Courtesy of architects

**"After" Photographs:** Beverly Multerer

## **Architects' Transformation Techniques:**

—Strategically remove walls on the main level, replacing the enclosed rooms with open, flowing spaces.

—Introduce bold color with a series of planes that draw the eye through the rooms, and keep the decor simple with a pared-down selection of materials including fir, brushed steel, oak, and maple.

—Update the exterior with a shake roof, a larger expanse of windows, and a metal railing.

—Previously hidden behind a wall, the stair is now a focal point of the main living area and has been modernized with a cable and teak railing. The original oak floors were restored, and the steel-frame windows were replaced with a fir-veneer variety, a good choice for locales that get lots of rain.

**I**F YOU HAVE SPENT TIME in the Northwest, you are probably familiar with ramblers. Placed onto the housing market in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these modest but solidly constructed homes are now ingrained into the landscape of places such as Seattle, and many have been remodeled to take advantage of their admirable qualities and bring them current with today's architectural trends.

Deborah Elvins loves ramblers and recognizes their potential. Soon after purchasing her 1958 home, she hired Julie Campbell and Buzz Tenenbom to design and oversee a remodel that would match her lifestyle and meet her budget. Working with the existing footprint, the architects focused their efforts on a main-level renovation that transformed the choppy 2,200-square-foot floor plan into one that moves effortlessly between spaces.

Because the house was structurally sound, the architects didn't have to shore up sagging ceilings or fix other serious problems, which helped keep the budget to a reasonable \$100,000. To further save money, Campbell and Tenenbom suggested only subtle exterior revisions meant to "hint at the modernization inside the home," Campbell says.



Before.

The home's footprint was not altered, and the updated exterior is meant to hint at the more dramatic renovation inside. The most noticeable changes are a new shake roof, more (and larger) windows, and a transparent guardrail made of steel posts linked with cable and topped with a teak handrail.



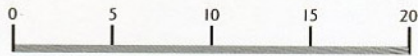


# Seattle Remodel

## Residence Remodel at Seattle, Washington

Cost of Remodel in 1998: \$100,000

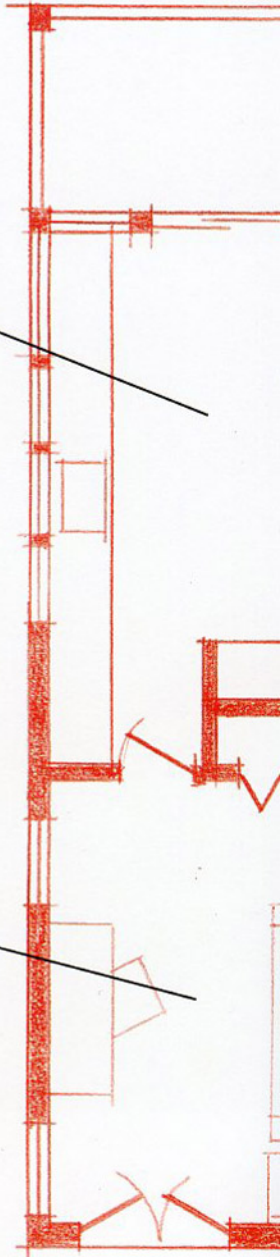
Architects: Julie Campbell and Buzz  
Tenenbom, CTA Design Builders



Scale: 1" equals 6'

Kitchen

Entry



Family  
Room

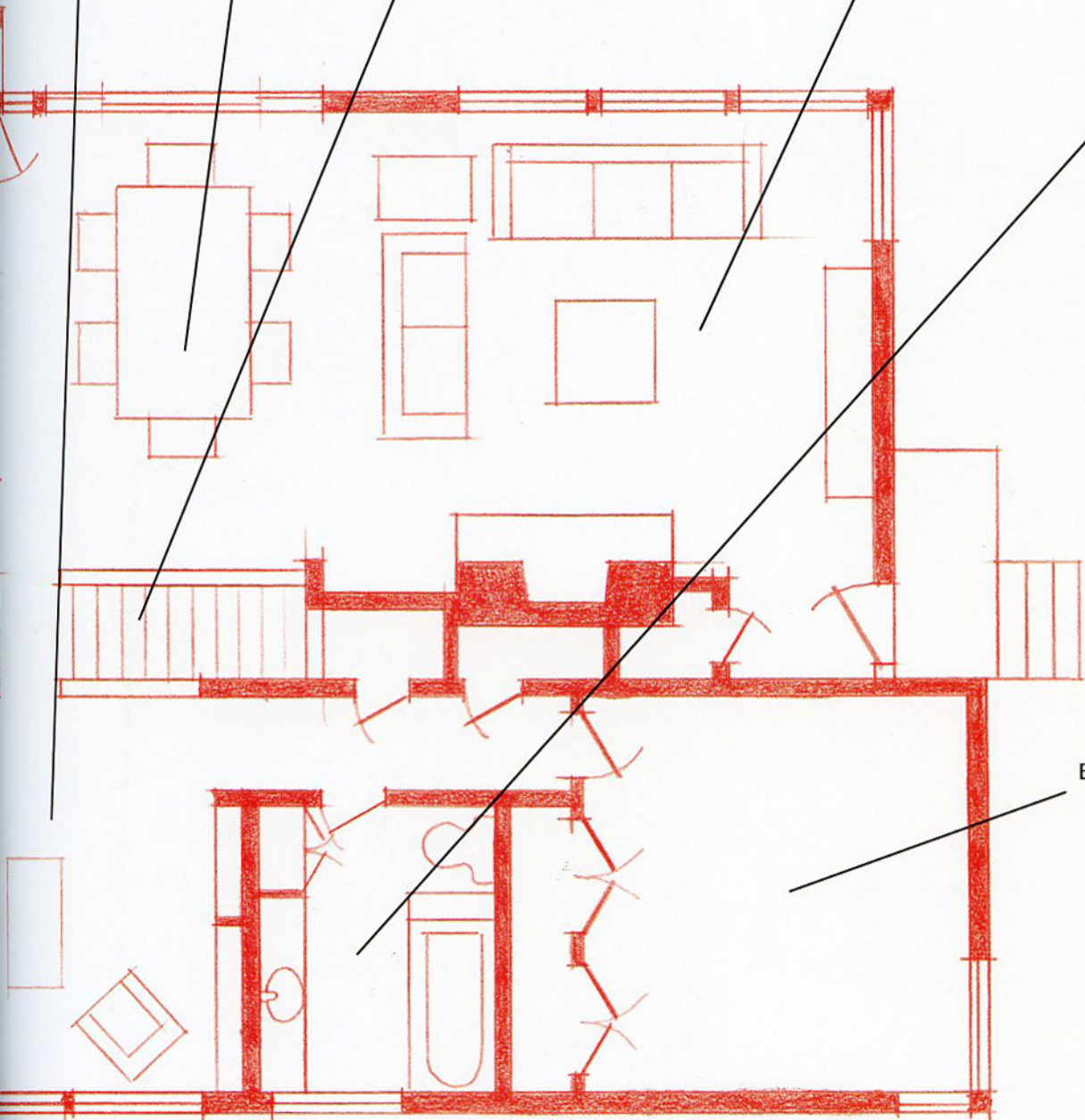
Dining  
Room

Stairs to  
Lower  
Level

Living  
Room

Bath

Bedroom



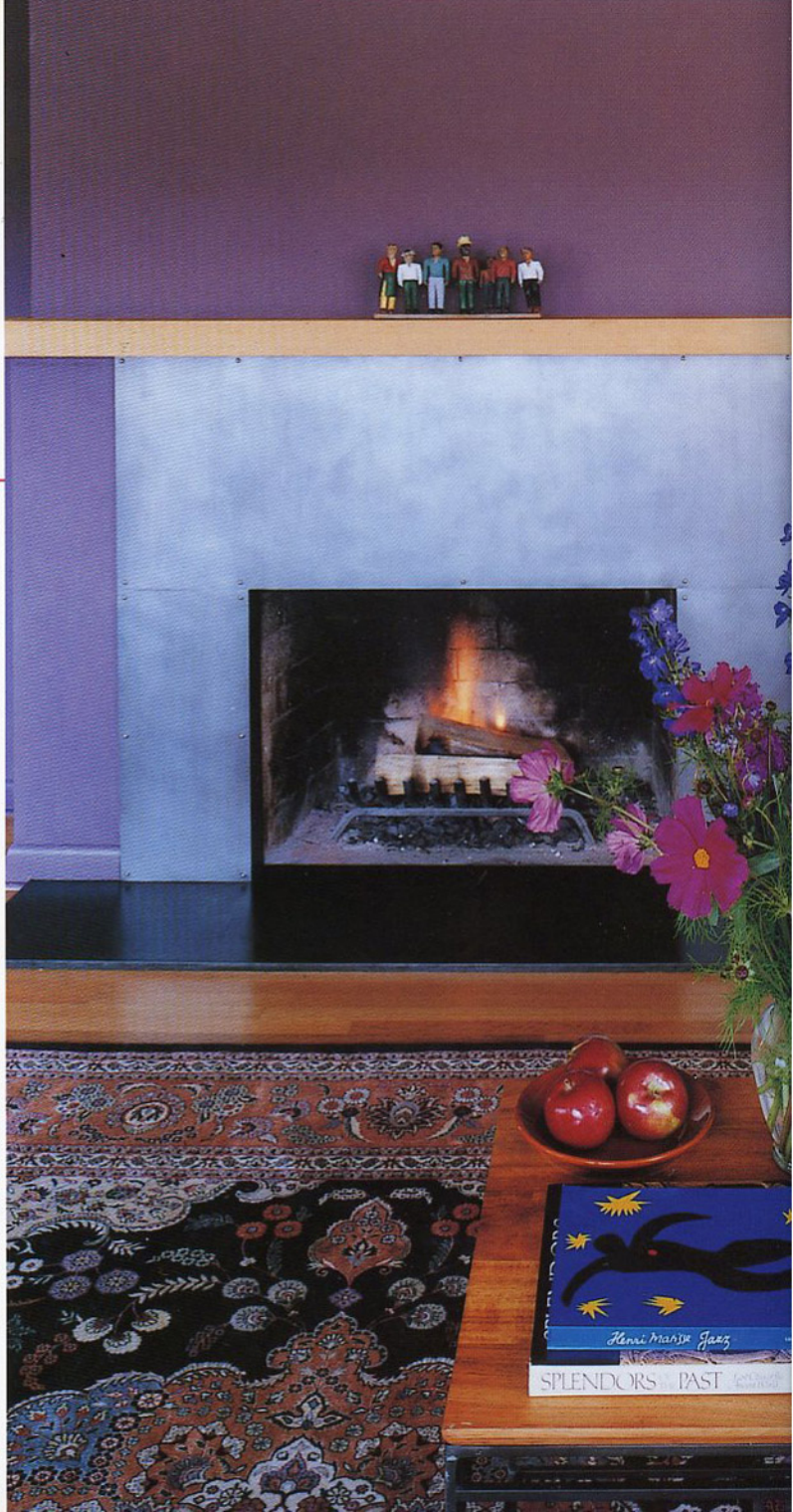
The original living room.



Originally clad in pink tile, the fireplace now has a sleek brushed-steel surround, a dark steel hearth, and a fir mantel. Inner walls in vibrant shades of purple and red establish a series of planes that draw the eye through the expanded spaces and toward the outer wall windows. A wall to the right of the bookshelf alcove was removed to expose the stairway.

### Overleaf:

The narrow, galley-type kitchen has been freed of its avocado color scheme, plywood-front cabinets and dire carpet and now features elegant maple cabinets, an oak floor, and large fir-veneer windows and sliders. By extending the counter beyond the cabinetry and supporting it with a simple tapered leg, the architects were able to add, at nominal expense, a built-in dining nook that overlooks the garden.













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Durable plastic laminate kitchen counters in lieu of granite saved thousands. The counters, which are black with a brushed patina, resemble the brushed steel found elsewhere in the home and complement the brushed-aluminum sinks. Other distinctive elements include a backsplash of blackened steel tiles patterned with threads of copper, and square drawer and cabinet pulls cut from the backsplash tiles.



The architects began with a reorientation of the layout to give it a more straightforward navigation. "Many ramblers, this one included, have pinched floor plans, but because of the way they are built, with trusses that allow for larger-than-average ceiling spans, it is possible to significantly open them up," Campbell explains. With this in mind, the architects took out two small bedrooms to form a connected family room and living/dining area. Removing a wall exposed the stair, which is now a central part of the plan. Because Elvins often has houseguests, she wanted to be able to accommodate them without compromising her privacy. The new configuration does exactly this: the living/dining area, family room, kitchen, and master suite are on the top floor, while the guest quarters, which received minor finish updates, are downstairs.

The floor-plan puzzle solved, the next step was to tackle the interiors. Typical of the times, the decorating scheme featured pink tile, avocado appliances, a bayberry bathtub and sink, and carpet in the kitchen. To brighten up the rooms and give them a contemporary appearance, the architects assembled a principal palette of fir, steel, and maple—a combination that had the added benefit of tempering costs. To illustrate, although the steel was comparatively expensive, the fir and maple, as well as the Sheetrock walls and plastic laminate counters, helped balance the budget, as did saving and refinishing the original oak floors. White paint on the outer

walls and vivid red and purple on the inner walls work together to create a series of planes that draw the eye through the expanded interiors, Campbell explains.

The architects also changed out the steel-frame windows with a fir-veneer variety (a wise option in a damp climate) and installed full-height windows and sliding doors for a more pronounced visual connection to the garden. The kitchen is in the same location but maple cabinets have replaced the plywood-front cabinets and oak has replaced the carpet. Elvins initially wanted granite kitchen counters but discovered they were too pricey. The architects proposed an attractive and affordable alternative: \$500 plastic laminate manufactured to resemble brushed steel. Visible on the home's exterior are a new shake roof, a steel-and-cable guardrail in place of a solid rail, and a reworked window placement.

"Deborah had a fairly modest budget and certainly didn't want a trophy house," Campbell concludes. "All it took was a few simple moves and a careful selection of materials to give her a home that is both casual and elegant and easily welcomes family and friends."



The bathroom's bayberry-and-pink color scheme, popular in 1958, has been replaced with white tile and fir cabinets. The small bathroom feels larger thanks to windows that open to a deck.

