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From "Fixer" to Farm Fresh

By Cathy Dausman



Beth Soto and Bob McClain at the job site. Photo Cathy Dausman

What's old is new again, thanks to an extensive tear-down remodel and upgrade for one Lafayette trail home. The home, at 663 Glenside Drive, was purchased last April by Lafayette residents Beth Soto and her business partner Bob McClain. Although the asking price for the spec home has not yet been determined, both say it will be on the market this spring.

Architect James Wallace of Orinda drew the plans; La Pointe Company is framing the house. Soto and McClain are its general contractors. McClain said the house was originally built as a single story home in 1949. A recent Zillow website listing shows a four bedroom, two bath, 2,162-square-foot home on 0.48 acres at the same address.

McClain said a second story was added later and the most recent expansion was in the 1990s. Current construction will add 1,300 square feet of living space plus an oversized garage. With a total of nearly 3,600 square feet of living space, the five bedroom, three and a half bath home will feature high-end fixtures and lighting, an oversized laundry and crafts room and hardwood floors in common areas.

Soto said its covered front porch and barn-like shutters on the second story facing the street should give

the finished product a modern farmhouse feel.

"It's really gonna be quite beautiful," she said, promising a light and airy home large enough for a family to live comfortably, yet not out of place for Lamorinda.

The level lot adjacent the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail contains fruit trees and rose bushes. Four of the five bedrooms, including the master, are on the ground floor. A fifth bedroom over the kitchen and dining areas has its own full bath with a sitting room across the hall. The area could easily be used as a second master suite, an au pair unit or in-law living quarters.

The pre-existing wood burning fireplace in the great room will be resurfaced. Soto said the home's "top of the line" kitchen overlooks the back yard and will feature a butler's pantry, a five-foot-wide refrigerator/freezer, honed Carrera marble countertops, gas range, double ovens and what she calls a "computer command center" - the house will be pre-wired for computer network access.

A mudroom with half bath leads out to a covered breezeway and the new detached garage on the lot's west side. The old garage space has been re-imagined as a dining room. The new garage is 540 square feet with two 9-foot-wide doors and one deep bay to accommodate a large SUV.

The house is being built with dual zone furnaces, water heaters and air conditioning systems and has been seismically updated. The entire lot will be fenced, with a gate leading directly to the bike trail, near where Soto plans to install an outdoor children's water fountain.

This is not the first house either owner has rebuilt, but it is their first project together. Soto said she completed a remodel near San Anselmo. McClain said his civil engineering and construction background helped him remodel two homes in the Rockridge area.

He called his first project "the worst house in the neighborhood." Both McClain and Soto find whole house residential remodeling simultaneously fun and challenging, and Soto credits local builder Tim Mcnamara for helping them understand the construction process.

For Soto, who loves decorating, the fun comes as she restores "a bit of history" in an area where farm houses and orchards once were common.

One challenge the two faced was complying with setback requirements, since the house sits at an angle on the property. Expanding the footprint was a trial and error process McClain referred to as "a Gordian knot."

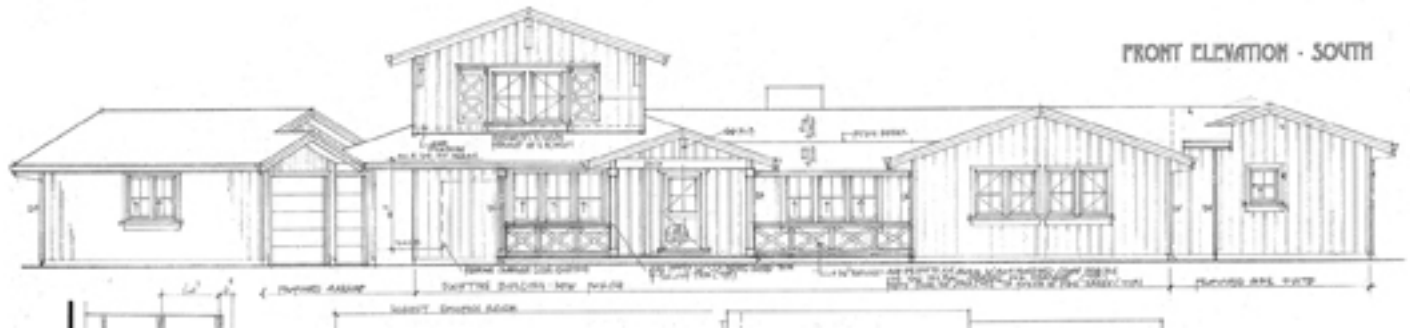
In the end Soto and McClain claimed a five-by-five foot bump-out in the kitchen for a seating nook and expanded the house 11 feet along the front. Amid the challenges, McClain said he enjoys the "new house smells" of lumber, carpet and paint.

The two plan a second local joint remodel in 2014, although Soto and McClain say "finding the next property" is its own challenge. Soto confided, "This is my dream house."

"Every house we fix is your dream house!" McClain said quickly.



663 Glenside Drive, Lafayette Photo Cathy Dausman



Graphic provided

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