

College-area residence beautifully renovated

Modesto Bee

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Photos by Bill Harris



A flawlessly renovated home in "the heart of the college area" awaits the buyer of 936 Wellesley Ave. in Modesto. This two-bedroom, two-bath retreat, offering approximately 1,470 square feet, was professionally redesigned with indoor/outdoor living areas that make the most of its .19-acre setting. "When they remodeled the home, they did everything right," says Ben Allustiarte of PMZ Real Estate, with whom the home is listed at \$569,500. "The desirability of the property is in the quality of the work they performed and the location."

Choice materials, craftsmanship and a vision for long-term functionality went into the year-long renovation, completed in December. Ann Lowry, an instructor and coordinator of the interior design program at Modesto Junior College, and owner of **Ann Lowry Planning & Design**, took the project from concept to completion. Lowry describes the original structure as "a 1950s, redwood, ranch-style bungalow." The renovation preserved the home's footprint, but introduced cosmetic, structural and spatial improvements.

Working with local contractors, Lowry enhanced traffic flow by moving the front door, widening interior doorways and eliminating unnecessary walls. She replaced carpet and linoleum with wide-plank, ebony-stained oak flooring in all rooms except the bathrooms, which are tiled. Dark paneling and plasterboard were removed and replaced, insulation added and a new heating, ventilation and cooling system installed.

The home was rewired to comply with, or exceed, current building codes and accommodate updated lighting, sound and security systems. "There's ambient, task and accent lighting in every room, allowing for flexibility, purpose and atmosphere," Lowry notes.

She describes the kitchen - one of her favorite rooms - as "extremely functional and great for entertaining." Amenities include double sinks, a dual-heat range (with gas burners and an electric oven) and custom maple cabinetry with full-extension drawers. Recessed and under-cabinet lighting is on dimmer switches. French doors offer views and access to a patio.



New stainless steel kitchen appliances include a side-by-side, counter-depth refrigerator. "Most refrigerators extend out beyond the counter," Lowry explains. "To maximize the space, higher-end refrigerators now maintain the same interior space, but they are the 24-inch depth of the counter." Granite countertops distinguish an island breakfast bar as well as an illuminated cabinet unit that separates the kitchen and dining area. Another set of French doors leads from the dining area to an outdoor patio.

Granite is repeated on an accent/display area at the end of the hallway and in a fireplace hearth that has been honed, or antiqued, to look like slate. Once floor-to-ceiling brick, the fireplace now features a contemporary mantel and surround that complement the warm, bright living area. An oversized window in the living area was replaced with tempered glass and downsized slightly to add wall space in a formerly unusable corner. Overhead recessed directional lighting provides gallery-style illumination on the main wall.

A bedroom-sized laundry room illustrates Lowry's foresight in creating spaces that meet both present and future needs. "One of the things I try to teach the students is not to just plan for the current utilization of the house, but to maximize its potential," she says. "It would be very simple with the roofline and configuration of the home to add another 500 or 600 feet off (the laundry room). ... I designed the lighting, the flooring and the access so that it could effectively become the entrance to a master suite (addition)," yet still function as a laundry room. The space includes a stackable washer and dryer, maple cabinetry, a tiled countertop and backsplash, sink and potential wine closet. Allustiarte points out that the space is large enough and has adequate wiring to serve as a home office as well.

In the master suite, a third set of French doors escapes to a private patio landscaped with a 6-foot pink camellia hedge and mature maple tree. Bedside controls operate the suite's overhead lighting. The master bath has been expanded and accommodates an oversized shower and custom cabinetry.

The home's two-car garage features a new door with an automatic opener. A premium shake roof, gutters and downspouts also are new.



To optimize the yard, Lowry and her team literally moved the earth, removing and replacing 9 inches of topsoil. "The house originally sat very low on the lot, so we re-graded to improve the drainage and totally re-landscaped," Lowry explains. French drains - large, rock-filled holes - ensure "no pooling of water on the lot at all." New shrubbery, hedges and lawn join mature Japanese maples, redwoods and citruses in creating a sun-dappled haven - kept green by a new sprinkler system on a master timer. Landscape lighting and new walkways enhance the scenery.

The renovation was a destination for several field trips by Lowry's interior design students, who observed the steps of the process and learned about materials and resources. "The skills and concepts that I was teaching were so related to what was going on," she says.

Lowry adds, "A lot of the quality workmanship and the improvements (in the home) are not readily evident. You have to understand construction and see the detailing and the craftsmanship. It's been essentially renovated from the framing outward."

936 WELLESLEY AVE., MODESTO: This 1,470-square-foot home, built in 1952, has been renovated to include wide-plank, ebony-stained oak flooring, a granite-topped kitchen island, new stainless steel appliances, new wiring, updated lighting and more. Listed with Ben Allustiarte of PMZ Real Estate.

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