

# Home profile: Making room

Olivia Anderson - July 28, 2022



*Elizabeth Jones and Michael Wolin moved into their Rosemont Cape Cod-style home in 2014. (Photo/Olivia Anderson)*



**By Olivia Anderson | [oanderson@alextimes.com](mailto:oanderson@alextimes.com)**

Elizabeth Jones and Michael Wolin's Rosemont home is quaint and charming. At approximately 1,500 square feet, the Cape Cod-style property includes three bedrooms, two baths and several young children running around; by all accounts, it should be fairly snug.

Yet walking into the house is an open, expansive experience, with plenty of room for both storage and living comfortably. The spacious feel of the home belies its actual size which, according to Elizabeth, was intentional.

“We really tried to maximize storage,” Elizabeth said. “When we worked with our contractor, we really wanted to make sure that the layout accommodated as much storage while still keeping an open living space.”

Since purchasing the home in 2014, Elizabeth and Michael made a series of renovations to transform it into a light-filled oasis with a soft, neutral color palette.

Originally, the Walnut Street home looked much more colorful than it does now. In fact, one of the first projects Elizabeth and Michael embarked on after moving in was “de-oranging” the place. The kitchen had orange terracotta flooring, cabinets and countertop backsplash, and the dining room featured a bright orange and red carpet. Updating this room took precedence.

“It was not an oriental, but it was made to look like an oriental and it looked painfully bad, so we replaced it,” Elizabeth laughed.



*The dining room originally had a bright orange and red carpet, which the couple tore out and replaced right after moving in. (Photo/Olivia Anderson)*

Then, about a year after moving in, they sprayed the kitchen cabinets and replaced the counter backsplash with tiles from Architectural Ceramics on Union Street. They swapped the original “orange-y” granite countertops for honed marble.

“[The kitchen has] been such a great space because it’s small but it functions well,” Elizabeth said. “Having marble is really nice to work with, and I don’t do much baking but if I did, I’m sure I’d like it even more because people love it for baking or bread making.”

“I really like the marble. It just looks really classic,” Michael added.

The couple also spent a significant amount of time redoing various closets, cabinets and bookshelves to maximize space. To the left of the front door, in the living room, are two sets of closets that the

couple had put in several years ago.

But rather than procuring all new materials for the closets, Elizabeth and Michael asked a carpenter to use hardware from one of the basement doors they ended up replacing.

"Being a designer, and my husband is very interested in architecture as well, we wanted to preserve as much as possible of the original house," Elizabeth said. "So, we were like, 'we're putting in new [basement doors], have the carpenter [use] what is already existing.'"

In the same room, two stark white bookshelves line the walls, which were redone at the same time they added the closets.

Although the bookshelves already existed, they were originally very narrow "because books were a lot smaller way back when, in the 1920s," Elizabeth said. The house was built in 1926.





*Elizabeth and Michael renovated both bookshelves in the living room, making them adjustable and deeper so as to hold more standard-size books. (Photo/Olivia Anderson)*

"It was the strangest collection of knick-knacks, and I found myself going out to buy things for a bookshelf that didn't accommodate actual books," she said.

A construction team renovated the bookshelves, making them adjustable and deeper to accommodate standard-size books.

To the right of the front door is the dining room, which includes several other updates beyond just the "de-oranging" project.

They repainted the room an olive green color, implemented built-in cabinets and enclosed the radiator in a white cover with a ledge on top for additional storage or for holding dishes during dinner parties.

"We knew we needed more storage, functional storage, as much

as you can hide in a small space,” Elizabeth said. “... The more we can hide, the better.”

One particular renovation came at an apt point in time. Right before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, Elizabeth and Michael were putting the finishing touches on their basement. Previously, it had been semi-finished with paneling, carpeted squares and an overall dark atmosphere.

With the goal of making the space more livable, the couple added drywall, recessed lighting, a kitchenette and a glass door that leads to the back yard.

“This ends up being the space where the kids play in and Michael and I watch T.V. sometimes down here,” Elizabeth said. “This ended up being a perfect timing project, because COVID shifted everybody outside. ... It ended up being kind of a wet bar for guests. It was like the pool house without the pool; they’d use the bathroom, grab drinks and then everybody would head back outside.”



*A fountain with water lettuce plants resides in the backyard. (Photo/Olivia Anderson)*

Michael said that although he was initially a bit apprehensive about how the basement would turn out, it ended up being one of his favorite rooms in the house.

“Elizabeth designed the floor plan and had a vision, and I wasn’t

really sure how it was going to work out, but it worked out well,” Michael said. “[The basement living room] in particular I think is a really nice set-up for watching T.V., but also for the girls to play in, and we hang out down here.”

In line with the pandemic adjustments, the couple also installed a back yard fountain last summer to increase outdoor usage. The idea stemmed from a trip to Rosemary Beach, Florida, where they saw many people with fountains in their yards and liked their appearance.

The fountain is adorned with water lettuces, which Elizabeth’s sister gave to the family as a gift. They rapidly multiplied, and now take up a significant portion of the fountain.

As a way to keep busy during quarantine, the couple undertook many activities around the house – one of which was creating a vegetable garden in the front yard. They planted peppers, tomatoes, herbs and snap peas, which Elizabeth said are “out of control but enjoyable” by September.

The yard also includes an array of flowers, from knockout roses to dahlias to hydrangeas.

“Almost everything has been planted from seeds in the front. I just scatter it, and whatever is happy stays and whatever is not happy doesn’t stay,” Elizabeth said.





*As part of the couple's "de-oranging" project, they sprayed the kitchen cabinets, replaced the tile backsplash and added marble countertops. (Photo/Olivia Anderson)*

During the past eight years, Elizabeth and Michael have chipped away at achieving their dream vision – a feat especially impressive given the compactness of the house.

For Elizabeth, who works as an interior designer, the process has been enjoyable.

"It's been fun. It's like a little laboratory. I don't know if everybody loves that in my house since I'm always coming up with an idea when I'm awake in the middle of the night," she said with a smile. "It's been a nice way to try things out before suggesting them to clients, for sure."

Through meticulous modifications such as paint jobs, added cabinetry and counter renovations, the couple transformed a small fixer-upper into a light and airy sanctuary with plenty of room for

the family of four to build many more years of memories.

“We spent a lot of time, when the kids were little, walking from home to the Old Town Farmers’ Market on the weekends. It’s a great activity; you end up seeing neighbors out there,” Elizabeth said. “... Just being able to access Old Town and all the shopping and restaurants, but then come back here afterwards, it feels so nice.”

