

### MORTGAGE RATES DIP

Rates on 30- and 15-year mortgages fell slightly this week but remain sharply higher than a year ago — a main reason for the refinancing slowdown. **Turn to H10**

# Homes

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Star Tribune

#### INDEX

Real estate transactions	<b>H18-22</b>
Kenneth Harney	<b>H3</b>
Help lines	<b>H15</b>
Calendar	<b>H11</b>
Rental news	<b>H40</b>



HOME OF THE MONTH

## Evolution *of a* bungalow

PAGE H4



The owners decided to build a garage when the house next door burned down. The architect designed a detached garage to preserve the south-facing windows.

A house in south Minneapolis has been a long time in the remaking — about 11 years.

A small addition created space for a larger kitchen. The ceiling beam is where the old kitchen wall was.

Photographs by Andrea Rugg



HOMES

COVER STORY: Home of the Month

# A work in progress nearly completed



Photo by Andrea Rugg

This home office is a fully equipped conference center with room for eight people. It's completely disconnected from the house, but "my commute time is only 4 seconds, unless I fall on the ice, and then it's only a minute," Jim Farstad said.

At least 15 projects later, the Farstad family is living in the house they envisioned 11 years ago.

**By Jim Buchta**  
Star Tribune Staff Writer

When Jim and Kathy Farstad hit the housing market several years ago, they never left home (Eden Prairie, at the time) without their architect, Rosemary McMonigal.

The Farstads were looking for a modest-size house in the city with the basic space and features that would allow them to adapt the house to changing needs. And they wanted an expert eye to help guide their decision.

After dragging McMonigal to nearly 30 houses, the Farstads found the perfect house in the perfect south Minneapolis neighborhood.

Well, the house wasn't really perfect. But it had tall ceilings, an open staircase, yards and yards of great woodwork and good bones.

"It was one of those houses where when we walked in, it just felt like home," Kathy said. "We were in here 30 minutes and we just knew this was it. The basics were there and we knew we could work with the rest."

The neighborhood though, was perfect. With its busy sidewalks and tree-lined streets, the neighborhood is a model of new urbanism.



David Brewster/Star Tribune



Before

Provided by Farstad family

Jim Farstad wanted his office to be physically separate from the house, so a set of stairs leads to it. The roofline and the dormer were extended to accommodate a small addition to make more room for the kitchen.



David Brewster/Star Tribune

**The Farstad family in their living room: Matthew, 6; mom Kathy; Katelyn, 16; Noah, 8; dad Jim, and Christopher, 17.**

"This is the best block in America," said Jim, sitting on his sunny three-season front porch while neighbors pushed strollers and tended their yards. "We have 20 houses with the best people on the planet."

The house itself had several shortcomings: The kitchen was too small to cook and eat in at the same time, the carpet was 25 years old and the wallpaper was "ghastly," Kathy said. In fact, the entire house needed a good updating.

The Farstads and McMonigal, whom they met at a local home and garden show, started planning. They decided to take on the house in phases and to carefully plan and evaluate every move. Living in the house while it was being worked on helped them prioritize what needed to be done. They also were able to make decisions as their family changed.

"A house should evolve as you live in it," McMonigal said.

And so it has.

The Farstads moved into the house with two kids, and now they have four. And at some point along the way, Jim decided to move his office home. To take the house through these family transitions, the Farstads relied on a close-knit collaboration with their architect.

"I know how important it is to draw things out several times," said Jim, a



Photo by Andrea Rugg

**Ten-foot ceilings on the main level help make the house feel more spacious.**

self-employed business consultant who has been involved in several commercial construction projects. "It's a lot of fun to get it all straight before you start throwing lumber around."

They also stuck to a couple of guiding principals: Make use of every square inch of the house, and don't make any changes that can't be undone later to accommodate another change.

**HOME continues on H7:**

— *First came playhouse/storage shed.*



Photo by Andrea Rugg

**With the exception of custom art glass, the Farstads' living room was virtually untouched.**

**PROJECT AT A GLANCE**

**Goal:** Transform a modest bungalow into a house that evolves with the needs of the family. The projects, which were designed to use every square inch of the house for storage and living, was divided into 15 phases.

**Size:** The house started with 2,060 square feet on two levels. It now has 3,400 finished square feet, including a finished basement and porch.

**Architect:** McMonigal Architects, Minneapolis

**Landscape architect:** Bob Hauck, Hauck Associates Inc., Minneapolis

**Construction budget:** \$75 to \$200 per square foot, depending on the project.

**Home of the Month**

The Home of the Month is published the first Saturday of every month through a partnership between the Star Tribune and the Minnesota chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The 12 architect-designed houses were selected by a jury of experts; the houses represent a range of price levels, styles and locations.

For more information about how to work with an architect or to find a registered AIA Minnesota architect, visit <http://www.aia-mn.org>.



**Before** Provided by Farstad family  
The old kitchen had a suspended ceiling and little room for the appliances and dining table.



Like other bungalows, the Farstads' house isn't big on space, so the doorway between the kitchen and dining room, at right, was widened to increase the sense of space, and pocket doors were installed to provide privacy when needed.

Photo by Andrea Rugg

## HOME from H5

After moving into the house, they refinished the walls and floors to make the house livable. Then, because the Farstads had young kids and no garage, McMonigal designed a two-story shed/playhouse for storage and a place for the kids.

Next, they carved out a family room, computer room and an extra bedroom in the basement.

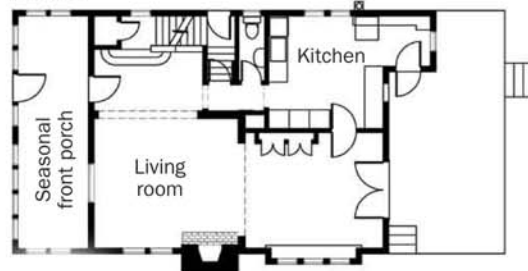
And then they tackled the kitchen. McMonigal added a few feet to the back

of the house by designing a small, two-story addition that blends into the back of the house. Now there's enough room for a foyer and a table that does double-duty as a workspace and informal dining table.

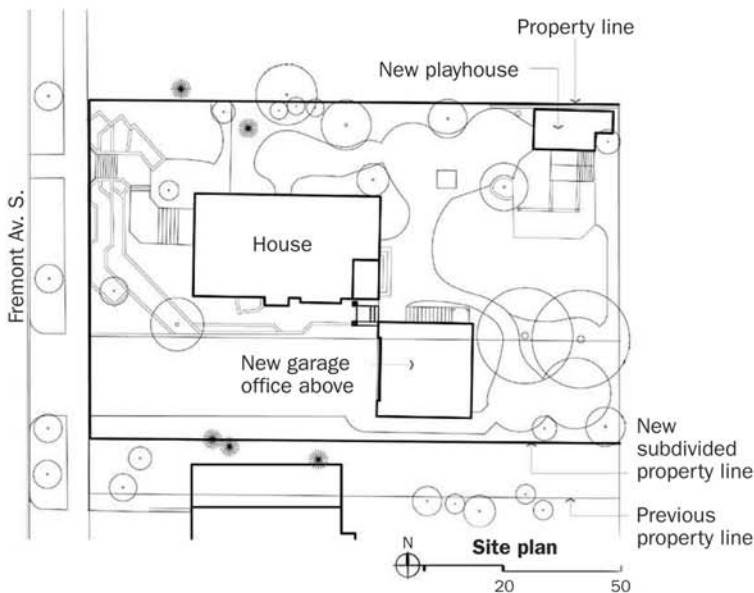
Some years back, the house next door burned down and both neighbors decided to buy the house, tear it down and split the lot between the two houses.

**HOME continues on H8:**  
— Still a few projects on the list.

**Before**



**After**



## Sow's ear to silk purse in 11 years

1. **Playhouse.** With no garage, the Farstads built a two-story structure in the backyard. It has room for bikes, gardening tools and trash on the bottom floor and a playhouse on the top floor.

2. **Basement.** The lower level was remodeled into a family room, computer/study area, bathroom, laundry and children's bedroom.

3. **Porch.** A decrepit front porch was restored and transformed into a three-season room with big windows that overlook a newly landscaped front yard.

4. **An addition.** The back of the house got a small addition that allowed the kitchen and bedroom above to get bigger. At the same time, the living room and dining room were remodeled. Custom art-glass windows were installed in the living room and foyer.

5. **The lot.** When the house next door burned down, the lot was subdivided with the neighbor on the other side after getting city approval and a new survey.

6. **Garage and office.** On the new side yard, a two-story garage/office was built. It's connected to the house via a covered walkway.

## HOME from H7

That gave the Farstads room for a garage with an office above for Jim. He said he's now the envy of the executives who stop by for meetings at his fully equipped conference center.

At least 15 projects and 11 years later, McMonigal and the Farstads haven't stopped mulling ideas. Though their wish list is much shorter than it was when they started a more than a decade ago, Jim wants a more park-like backyard, and Kathy hankers for more storage space.

On McMonigal's wish list? More clients like the Farstads.

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## Wisdom from the Farstads

- Don't buy or build more house than you'll be comfortable with when the kids leave.
- Select quality over quantity of space.
- Avoid houses that have recent additions or improvements that you'll just end up tearing out anyway to complete your own projects.
- If you're combining more than one big project, consider moving out temporarily.
- Draw your ideas over and over again; it's easier to discard a bad idea than it is a bad project.