

# Re-engineered home makes use of views

By Jordan Guinn



Photo: Liz Rusby/the Grubb Co.

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The kitchen overlooks the living/dining area and the Brazilian hardwood view deck.

Plenty of people buy lackluster properties before remodeling and selling without the slightest nostalgia or emotion.

[Joanna Martinez](#) and her husband, Carlos, aren't part of that group.

"We would be the worst property flippers ever," said Joanna Martinez of 778 Contra Costa Ave. in Berkeley's Thousand Oaks neighborhood. "We poured our energy into every detail and all the minutiae, down to the door handles."

The re-engineered contemporary now offers a terraced backyard, a living roof deck, an open floor plan and a harmonious blend of hardwood, glass, metal and stone. Selling the home after only three years wasn't part of the plan, but life remains notoriously unconcerned with anyone's plans. [Carlos Martinez](#), a hydrologist, possesses a highly specialized skill set and must be ready to move with little notice for the next stage of his career, Joanna Martinez said.

The remodel began when the couple took over the property. They spent as much time planning and getting approvals as they did in construction. Ambitious planning demanded the couple invest considerable time, energy and resources in the project.

"It's an example of be careful what you dream for because then you have to build it," Joanna Martinez said. "It's definitely nice to have a husband who's an engineer."

Developing outdoor spaces produced a litany of challenges. Finesse and diligence with officials resulted in the creation of a living roof deck with bay views, a fire pit and cabinetry.

Retaining walls sprouted as the backyard transformed into a terraced landscape with a bocce court, herb garden, play area and fruit trees on various levels. Boulders now accenting the yard previously sat underground and were unearthed during the renovation.

International trips inspired the couple's creation of a light-filled interior and outdoor access from many rooms.

"Mediterranean homes revolve around nature and have this very open feel," Joanna Martinez said. "There's not a lot of barriers. The indoors and outdoors are one in the sense that you're not in this block house that's obstructing the view."

A Brazilian hardwood deck off the main level overlooks the graded landscape and backs up to the great room. The kitchen commands attention through professional appliances, like the Bertazzoni five-burner range, and stylish designer lighting above the quartz-topped center island.

Wide-plank hickory flooring lines the residence with two master suites. The true master suite — located on the main level — offers a fireplace with concrete surround, a walk-in closet, a spa bathroom and direct access to an outdoor Ofuro soaking tub.

Reticence about selling eventually transitioned to acceptance, a shift Joanna Martinez credits to her stager, [Mary Cronin](#) of the [Design Shop](#) in Emeryville.

"We put so much effort and thought into every stitch of the home. Mary's someone I trust to see the beauty and she's been immensely helpful and comforting," Joanna Martinez said.

Visit [www.778ContraCostaAve.com](http://www.778ContraCostaAve.com) for more details.

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## Details

**Address:** 778 Contra Costa Ave., Berkeley.

**Price:** \$2.15 million.

**Features:** Re-engineered five-bedroom contemporary in the Thousand Oaks neighborhood offers a terraced backyard, a Brazilian hardwood deck and a living roof deck with a fire pit and bay views. The main level's open floor plan includes a professional-grade chef's kitchen, while the nearby master suite enjoys a walk-in closet, fireplace, spa bathroom and outdoor soaking tub.