

# All in the Family

An architect builds a home for his parents that everyone can enjoy

BY WENDY MANWARREN GENERES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL BODY

Sasan Nakhshab and Mitra Bagheri's inviting patio, nestled into the slope of their Mission Hills home, provides space to entertain and relax. On the opposite side of the railing, a rooftop garden of water-wise grasses and plants grows on what would have been wasted space above the garage.



**W**hen Soheil Nakhshab of Nakhshab Development and Design designed his parents' second residence tucked up on a narrow street in Mission Hills, he was thinking long term. He wanted to create a LEED Gold home with drought-tolerant landscaping, water-efficient fittings and fixtures, energy-efficient LED lighting, energy-star appliances and solar power, yes; but he also wanted it to be a home where his parents, Sasan Nakhshab and Mitra Bagheri, could age in place; and he wanted it all to be on a piece of property that he and his family—wife Susana and kids, Shayan, 7, and Sofia, 4—could reside near in the future.

This modern, nearly 4,000-square-foot house that appears to float as a single level above the sloped lot, does all that—and more.

First, the home, a new construction project that was completed in 2016, is sustainable. From the product finishes and landscaping to the minimal furnishings, the two-story, six-bedroom, five-bathroom abode is environmentally friendly.

"We did built-in cabinetry in the kitchen, living room and bedrooms," he says. "This meant my parents didn't have to buy a bunch of new furnishings to gain the storage they needed."

The cabinetry that flanks one wall in the main room has a custom fireplace and a concealed, built-in bar to maximize functionality. In the kitchen, the same hide-everything-away philosophy holds true. For a camouflaging effect, the refrigerator and dishwasher are faced with cabinet panels that match other cabinetry in the cook's space. A massive island and other doors

**Above:** Stairs from the patio lead up to a rooftop deck and dining space, where you can take in the canyon setting and get lost in the woodsy-feeling environment. Twenty-five solar panels are discreetly integrated into the rooftop design; you don't even notice they're there. "My parents' electric bill is non-existent," architect Soheil Nakhshab says.

**Facing page:** The 20-foot-wide sliding glass door that tucks away into the walls stays open in spring so the family can take full advantage of all the public spaces. Here, Soheil and wife Susana enjoy refreshments on the roof with their daughter Sofia while Mitra slices lemons for later, Shayan sits on the counter and Sasan talks to him in the kitchen.

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The mid-century modern-inspired home preserves the lot's existing terrain and appears to float above the steep slope with a cantilever design.





and drawers keep the secondary appliances, such as the coffee maker, out of sight.

Soheil and his mother, Mitra, scoured second-hand stores for the few pieces they did purchase, like the mid-century modern sofa and chairs in the library. They then had them reupholstered in retro red florals and colorful stripe patterns. "I like finding fabrics that appeal to me," Mitra says.

Besides the eco-friendly components, Soheil designed a home that Sasan and Mitra can live in forever. The master bath's shower features a zero-threshold entry, a generous bench and a hand-held spray. And though there are stairs to climb from the front entrance to the main level, Soheil also installed an elevator.

"In my culture, we live in multi-generational homes," says Soheil, whose family came to the States as refugees from Iran in 1984. "We don't graduate and move out of our parent's homes. We stay. I lived with my parents until I got married in my late 20s. It's what I know, so it's how I build."

The heart of this home resides in its center: a massive communal space that opens out to a two-level yard with sitting areas and a fire pit off the main level and, on the roof two stairways up, another seating space and designated dining. "This entire indoor/outdoor public space is where we live, dine, eat, cook; it's where my kids play and my parents entertain," Soheil says.

It's also what makes this residence very San Diego. "And it's my very favorite part of the home," Sasan says.

To be sure, Soheil definitely created a home to fit the San Diego lifestyle, but he also maintained his family's cultural design concepts. For instance, it's very typical to have transitional areas between the public and private areas in a Persian home. So instead of fashioning a hallway to get to the bedrooms, Soheil created a smaller, more intimate sitting area/library/TV room (where those vintage furnishings live) that segues into two bedrooms and the master suite on one side of the home.

"I built a home that preserves our culture because to abandon that would be a disgrace," Soheil says.

And the young architect practices what he preaches: Catty corner to his parent's home, he points out a giant lot—30,000 square feet of empty space—that he recently purchased. He plans to carve it up a bit and build homes for his family and his brother's family.

"I want to instill this communal living philosophy in my own children," he says, "because a solid foundation starts with the family and continues into adulthood." ❖

**Above: Sofia and Shayan play in the smaller sitting area/library/TV room off their grandparents' master suite and the rooms they stay in when they sleep over.**

**Facing page clockwise from top: Inside, the main entertaining room features a wall of built-in teak cabinetry that surrounds a 7-foot-long custom fireplace. • One wall in the main room is all windows, giving panoramic views. • The adjoining kitchen employs the same teak cabinets and a massive Carrera marble island.**

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