



## The Oregonian

### Trading up Patience and discipline frame a young architect's dream house

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**Lori Tobias**  
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Every architect dreams of building his or her own home. Richard Shugar was no different, but at 26 and newly married, the architect assumed that dream was a long way off.

Meanwhile, he and wife Kamala, a deputy district attorney in Lane County, found themselves a small apartment, saved their money and began looking for their first home. "We thought we were going to stay there six months," Richard says. But three years later, they were still in their apartment.

"We found several homes, made several offers, but for one reason or another, the deal would fall through. We thought, 'OK, what if we were able to buy a piece of property and hold onto it for a few years until we can build up equity and build a house?'"

And so the Shugars began searching for that perfect piece of land. They looked outside the city where new property was opening up, but lots were expensive and too far out of town. After two more years, they saw a promising ad. But when they checked out the land, they found a steep site facing east -- Kamala had her heart set on one facing west like her childhood home -- surrounded by new homes ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000. Disappointed once more, they called the owner. She invited them to see another lot on the south side of town.

"We were driving up the hill and we see the property and immediately we know that was the lot," recalls Richard, a partner with Waterbury Shugar Architecture LLP in Eugene. The lot had a view of Spencer Butte, where Richard had proposed to Kamala, was set in a quiet neighborhood of moderately priced homes, and was in walking distance to an elementary school and grocery store. Better yet, they could afford it.

Richard went to work designing a house that would suit the site and their lifestyle. They wanted to capture the views, particularly Spencer Butte, but they didn't want to remove existing trees. It would need to be representative of the regional style, make the utmost use of natural light and have a south-facing outdoor "room." Most important, the house had to be less than 2,000 square feet to stay within their budget.

Today, Richard, 36, Kamala, 33, and their 3-year-old son, Avi, share a house that embodies the spirit of creativity and the art of compromise.

Some of the trade-offs were simple. When the bamboo flooring they'd set their sights on cost several thousand dollars more than an engineered-wood floor, they went with the less expensive. Instead of buying a pricey hutch, Richard designed legs for a wall cabinet to imitate the look of furniture. And, rather than splurge on a designer refrigerator, he mimicked a high-end design by building cabinets alongside and above the stainless steel, standard-depth appliance.

For kitchen countertops, granite would have been ideal, but costly. Richard opted for laminate, the least expensive countertop material, then added a designer edge by rimming the counters in birch plywood. "It

looks like a solid piece of edging with a series of horizontal stripes," he explains. "It's actually three layers of plywood glued together with a clear lacquer finish over the top."

Some trade-offs are temporary. When Richard discovered there was no money left for the two-sided family room fireplace, he built a bench in its place, leaving open the possibility of a fireplace later. Likewise, the Shugars make do with old bookshelves and curtains in place of the built-in pantry they'd prefer. And, sleeping lofts in the children's rooms (the couple are expecting their second child in July) also will have to come later, though Richard designed the upper spaces with electric outlets, as well as strong framing so ladders could be added later.

But in at least one instance, compromise was just not an option. Vinyl windows would have cost half as much as wood windows, but the trade-off was not worth the savings. "The rooms we live in are shaped by natural light," Richard says. "How that enters a room needs to be well thought out and well designed. Using wood windows really helped capture that."

On the outside, Richard kept materials simple but true to the Oregon vernacular style of the two-story home. Barn-red plywood siding combines with cedar shingles to reflect the farmhouse and bungalow styles of the area, while galvanized steel on overhangs offers practical protection from the elements, as well as unexpected flash. Rain chains channel water from the gutters, while the "butterfly" roofline adds to the custom feel of the house. "People seem to think it's dramatic and different," he says. "But it's really a very simple method of directing rain off your roof."

Last year, Richard won kudos from the design world when his house was featured in "The House You Build " by Duo Dickinson (The Taunton Press, 2004) .

After so many difficult choices, it validated that he'd chosen well. But nothing, says Richard, is more satisfying than simply arriving home at the end of the day.

"I love my house. It brings me comfort. I really feel at home here."

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## BUILDING BLOCKS

Size: 1,964 square feet, 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths

Cost: About \$140 per square foot for the house only; Richard Shugar's professional connections helped keep down cost; lot cost \$42,000 in 1997.

Home since: The family moved into the house in 2001.

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