



# Woodland Mid-Mod

Jackson Design & Remodeling helps the owners of a midcentury modern home open up their main floor to include a sleek kitchen, keeping with the architectural style.

*by Emily Blackburn*



**AN** older couple was making plans to give their home to their daughter. They wanted to leave it with a kitchen that was completely up to date for the long haul. It would not only be functional for decades to come, but it would also be a space that would endure as beautiful.

The home, built in the 1980s and located in Poway, California, is surrounded by forest on what Jackson Design & Remodeling’s Jim Groen describes as being in “an older area, a beautifully established area of large-acreage properties,” lending itself naturally to organic, cabin-like warmth.

The kitchen as it existed was cramped, located in the darkest section of the house. Counter space was limited and cluttered with outdated appliances, and it lacked the cabinet space to store them. Additionally, although located in the middle of the house, the kitchen was cut off from both the dining room and the living room, disrupting the flow of traffic between the three spaces.

The couple, who are in their 70s, wanted to bring a fresh look to their home and give it new life, says Groen, project director and architect for Jackson. They wanted to open up their home and make it lighter and airier, as well as modernized. Their daughter, to whom they planned to eventually gift the home, lives in Washington, D.C., but through screen-share meetings was able to be closely involved with the project.

By removing walls, a brighter, airier kitchen was designed with ample space for multiple cooks and for storing appliances, many of which had been replaced. Instead of dark, midcentury cupboards and countertops, the new kitchen offers simple, clean lines and lighter, natural colors to continue to make the space seem bigger and more breathable.

The kitchen project, which won a Master Design Award in a kitchen category, was only a part of the company’s work on behalf of this client. They raised and rebuilt the roof for much of the home.



And they moved windows and doors to centralize a flow of traffic and open up different main floor spaces, aside from the kitchen. Their work unified the new and enlarged living spaces.

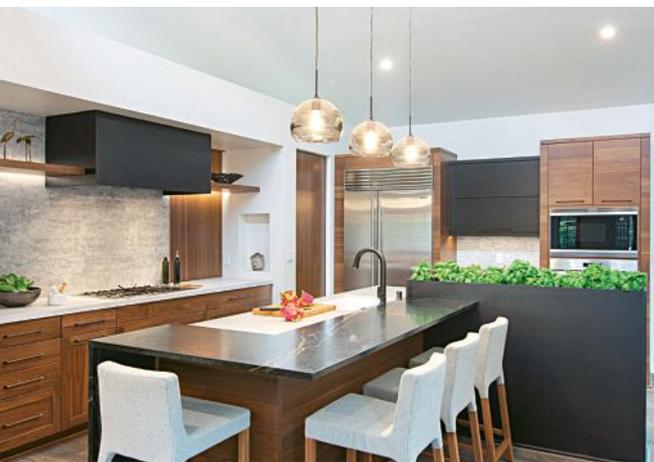
**Significant structural changes were made to create the dramatically more open-concept space. The roof was removed and redone in a shed style.**

### Changing Course

Jackson was brought in after design work had begun with a different architectural firm. The clients felt they weren’t making much headway in realizing their vision.

The previous architect “really wanted to take the roof off the central living area, which had the entryway, kitchen, dining room and family room, so we could create a beautiful, tall, open, spacious feel for the area,” Groen explains. “And he wasn’t able to make progress [on that] with the current team he was working with, so that’s when we were invited in. We took the project over and started from the ground up.”





For the wife, an avid gardener, interior designer Rosella Gonzalez created a geometric herb garden divider that brings greenery to the space. Careful consideration went into ensuring it has water containment.

To safely open up the ceiling, the team opted to retain the load-bearing walls, so they could rebuild the entire roof structure. The original vision was to create a tall, vaulted ceiling with a ridge beam down the middle. That idea was scrapped by residential designer for Jackson, Arnold Garza, in favor of an asymmetrical shed roof with a line of windows across it. “I think it added a really interesting sculptural feel to the space, versus a monotonous single ridge,” Groen says. “It also helped define the space of the dining room on one side, and the kitchen and family room on the other.” The asymmetrical ceiling adds architectural interest and height, while the shelf of windows lets more light into the space.



### Spatial Divide

The structural changes were far from over. To accommodate reorganizing the front third of the home, the Jackson team moved back the kitchen walls, expanding the main room and creating a much more open flow between the kitchen and living spaces.

“The original home was so compartmentalized. They were looking for a more open and spacious feel,” Groen says. “But you can’t just do that because then all of a sudden you’re in a train terminal that has to somehow feel like home.”

In opening up the space and creating more room to design specific functional spaces, the team reorganized the exterior windows and doors to create an entry vestibule. Previously, when someone entered the original home, they had to walk through a courtyard with a landscape wall and roofing structure over it, creating a claustrophobic and dark front entryway that opened into a narrow hall and faced a closet and a bathroom door.

Moving the front door and windows to be more central brought the focus back to the living areas of the home, not to mention lightening and opening up the space. Now, when one enters the house, they pass through an open, unsheltered courtyard, which allows more light into the home through the new east-facing windows.

This shift gave a more defined entry structure and flow to the home. “It reorganized the space, with the entry to a formal dining room on one side of the entryway, and a casual living room on the other and with the kitchen behind it,” Groen says.

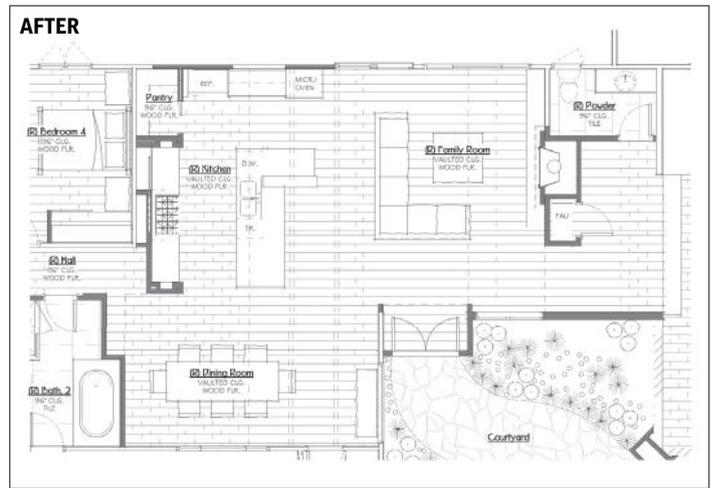
In what is now the living room, Jackson removed what was previously a mechanical closet in favor of creating a fireplace to replace one they removed from the original family room. The fireplace acts as an anchor in the living space, creating separation between the living room and the kitchen.

In addition, there were a number of challenges that Groen calls “a normal day-in-the-life of a residential remodeler.” In this case it was dry rot, termites and deferred maintenance. The team also replaced a sewer line, re-zoned the HVAC system due to changes in the ceiling, and filled in new concrete where past remodels had simply left plywood.

### Sculptural Zen

Working with Jackson senior interior designer Rosella Gonzalez, the clients outlined all the previously mentioned items that didn’t work in their existing kitchen, mainly that it was dark, cramped and hard to work in. In turn, she helped bring to life a kitchen that flowed into the rest of the house and gave them much needed space to work.

A large 8- by 10-foot L-shaped island was added to the middle of the kitchen to delineate new cooking, dining and food-prep spaces. And the island now provides an abundance of counter and cabinet



Previously claustrophobic and dark, the new layout combines living and kitchen space to create a single unified, open concept that allows the homeowners to entertain and move throughout the space with ease.

storage space, something the original kitchen was greatly lacking. Storage was maximized with a mixture of shaker-style and slab cabinetry in rich walnut. The shape of the island, as opposed to a standard rectangle, was arrived at through Gonzalez’s view of how the kitchen would flow most intuitively. “What [Gonzalez] did was sculpt the working areas out and defined the seating areas,” Groen says. Two different colors of quartz, with a waterfall edge between them, was used to differentiate between work and dining areas.

Low-hanging lighting fixtures add to the coziness of the dining section of the island, giving the impression of an intimate, applied ceiling to that specific spot.

The drywall alcove carved out around the cooktop creates the illusion of separation and privacy, mirrored by the wall of appliances on the adjacent wall. In the alcove are two cutout window shelves in addition to the floating shelves above the counter, where the homeowners can now store art objects and spices. The kitchen cabinets along the adjacent wall, the same height as the alcove instead of reaching to the ceiling, help to provide delineation between the kitchen space and the living room space.

A disappearing door to the right of the ebony box hood was a one-of-a-kind element designed to slide into the wall and reveal a cabinet for storing spices and cooking oils. According to the team, “hours of planning and skill went into getting the sliding door to look beautiful and work with precision.”

For the wife, an avid gardener, Gonzalez created a geometric ebony herb garden divider across the island, allowing her easy access to her plants while cooking and also creating a visual barrier, hiding the work counter from view of the dining counter. The piece required a meticulous design for interior metal liners to ensure water containment, Groen notes.

Further emphasis on the natural textures, such as the porcelain tile backsplash with the appearance of imperfect concrete as well as the walnut cabinets, lends an organic feel to the space.

The ebony box hood was an unusual choice, Groen notes, especially in a space that was so inspired by nature. However, it works with the simplicity of the design and draws cohesion with the ebony herb garden divider and the black floating cabinet on the adjacent wall creates symmetry across the space.

Through these elements, combined with the cabinets stopping a few feet short of the ceiling, Gonzalez was able to create the impression of more deliberate space and a “sculptural feel with those components,” Groen says. “They really help the space not feel like it’s just an empty, massive void, but gives it human scale and some intimacy.”

Everything down to the casings around the new windows had to be considered in order to make the old, existing home mesh with the new.

“This whole design was nothing off the shelf,” Groen stresses. “I mean, everything was custom, custom. Everything is original based on what the clients were saying to [Gonzalez], and based on that, she would create the textures in the area and know how they were going to move around the kitchen and how it all worked together.” With her work the kitchen, previously relegated to a dark corner of the home, becomes a new focal point of the house.

“This wasn’t just a ‘let me take this kitchen out and put something new’ remodel,” he says. “We were really tearing the middle of a house and rebuilding it. It had a ton of challenges; but our goal, as it is with every project, we rise to the occasion and problem solve, and we work with our clients so that when the project is done, we can celebrate it and we can leave them with a home they’re going to love for a long time.” **QR**

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**GOLD**

**COMPANY INFORMATION**

Jackson Design & Remodeling  
San Diego, Calif.  
jacksondesignandremodeling.com

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

Location: Poway, Calif.  
Square footage before: 150  
Square footage after: 227  
Project cost: \$185,000

**PRODUCT INFORMATION**

Refrigerator: Sub-Zero  
Oven: Wolf  
Microwave: Wolf  
Cooktop: Fisher & Paykel  
Hood: Zephyr  
Sink: Kohler  
Faucet: Kohler  
Soap dispenser: Mirabelle  
Island lighting: Spirit  
Dining lighting: Exos  
Flooring: Monarch Plank Hardwood  
Cabinetry: DeWils  
Hardware: Top Knobs  
Countertops: Tutto Marmo; Cosentino  
Paint: Sherwin-Williams