

# SWEET SPOT

By Julie Catalano  
Photography by Ryann Ford

*More than 10 years ago, a cozy 1920s bungalow in downtown Austin enchanted the young local professional couple, and they soon nestled into a neighborhood they loved. As their family grew, they faced a dilemma: Move, or move on to the next stage of both their family and their very special abode.*





After deciding that they couldn't give up the prime location — what with their favorite haunts and hotspots within walking and biking distance — they turned to Liz MacPhail, interior designer and owner of Liz MacPhail Interiors, Austin. “The work was needed to solve the obvious issues in the house,” she says, “but it had to also respect the history, integrity and charm of a 1923 classic two bedroom/one bath.”

The architect and build team was Ryan Weekly of Weekly

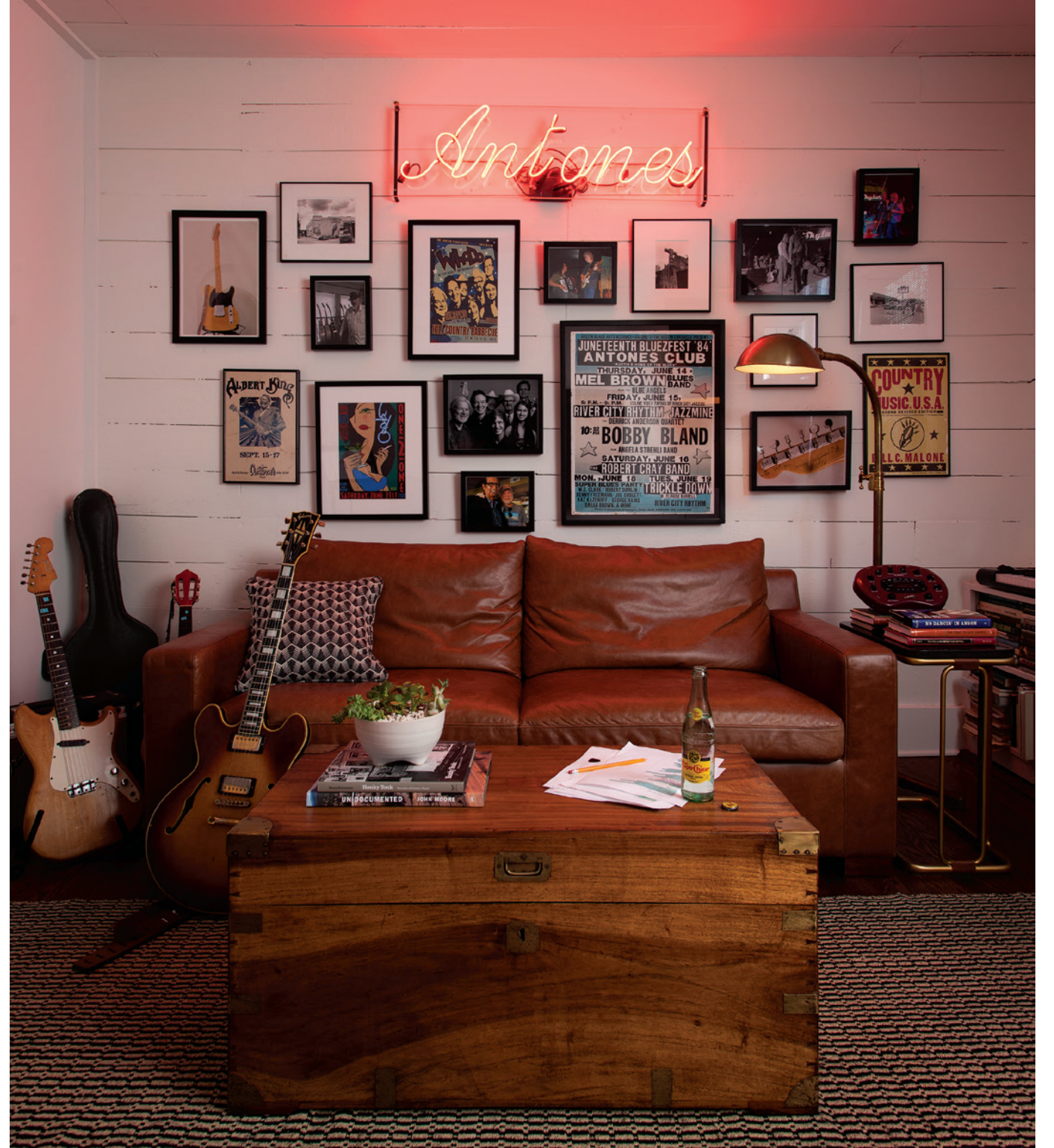
Custom Homes, tasked with both adding the much-needed top level children's addition and fixing some “awkward and choppy flow issues” downstairs, says MacPhail.

“When you walked in it was kind of funky,” the homeowner recalls, chuckling. “There was a room with two doors coming and going, which we made smaller and added a hallway through the center of the house.” That opened up the space and gave a more logical connection to the living room, dining, kitchen, sunroom and media room.

It also opened up endless possibilities for the homeown-

er's favorite design element: “I wanted a white house with lots of color,” she says. “I love color. I wear color. And I felt it was one way to make our house unique.” The overarching concept for the house, adds MacPhail, “was black and white and wood.” Against that basic palette, even small doses of color make a big impact.

The living room, with its Chesterfield sofa in green performance velvet, is a perfect example of what MacPhail calls “color and pattern and fun.” The eye-catching sofa is accented by a striking abstract overhead by New York-based Michael



Hambouz from Twyla and a wool rug from Annie Selke Companies® underneath. Blue swivel chairs from West Elm® complete the welcoming sitting area.

They painted the original fireplace glossy black, used black and white tile at the hearth, and added a glass fire screen from CB2. The thrift store side table also got the black paint treatment and holds one of a pair of the homeowners' white lamps, outfitted with custom shades in a playful pattern. Green candlesticks perched on the mantel are vintage pottery from Africa.

More color spills over into the adjacent sunroom, designed as a comfortable sunny spot for the parents to enjoy coffee and quiet conversation, or a favorite book or newspaper. The rattan settee was a Craigslist find, cleaned up, sealed, and now sporting a custom cushion in a vibrant St Frank textile. Leather chair is from Four Hands, rug from Serena & Lily, and the wicker pouf is vintage.

Also in the sunroom, a window vignette of Craigslist table bases topped by thick glass showcases ancient artifacts from Mexico, "straight out of a box of the homeowners' collections



from their travels,” says MacPhail. The birdcage hanging overhead is from the garage, with greenery added. “Probably the most fun part of this project was how much there was to pull from,” she adds. “We just helped them get everything out of boxes and put it all together.” Like the collection of masks in the entry and the timeworn mirror over the fireplace, unearthed from piles of art and accessories, some of which had never seen the light of day.

The dining room color is on a smaller scale but no less arresting. MacPhail found the dining table base — a vintage painted urn — on 1stdibs.com. Although it stretched the budget a bit, the homeowner gave the go-ahead after one look with no regrets (“I had to have it,” she says). A 10-year-old loveseat got a bold blue leather makeover with contrast piping and new feet to raise it a few inches. The black ceiling adds a touch of drama to white walls, and in a quiet corner, a vintage dresser from grad school days is surrounded by a collection of aged pencil drawings and family oils in subdued hues.

The kitchen continues the black and white scheme with a fresh coat of white paint on new and existing cabinetry, and high-contrast black knobs. A freestanding weathered hutch provides storage and gives a collected, vintage feel — scraped down, sealed and painted a bold Kelly green on the inside. Off the kitchen, a new, expanded mudroom was



equipped for efficiency with a custom drop-zone space for bags, shoes and sports stuff in cabinets and cubbyholes. “When the mudroom was opened up to the kitchen,” says MacPhail, “we added a peninsula-style eat-in area.” Counter stools from Industry West have a custom faux leather seat cushion in Kelly green.

The media room is a family favorite, a place for the family to enjoy listening to — and making — music. Framed prints, posters and photographs serve as reminders of fun times, underneath the glow of a neon sign from blues haven Antone’s. “It’s a great piece of history and a beautiful Austin relic,” says the homeowner. For the occasional guest or sleepover, the comfy leather sofa bed from Article is made up with blankets and pillows from the wood and brass coffee table that doubles as storage.

The homeowners couldn’t be happier with the result of the project, says MacPhail. “This was a classic case of a house that didn’t have hallways and interior doors and access points in the right places.” Resolving these issues, especially in the case of older homes, “can make these houses work, and that is what saves them for another 100 years.” Sweet. ♦

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