

Fruit trees: Discover the joy in growing your own fruit by using these tips **Page 2**

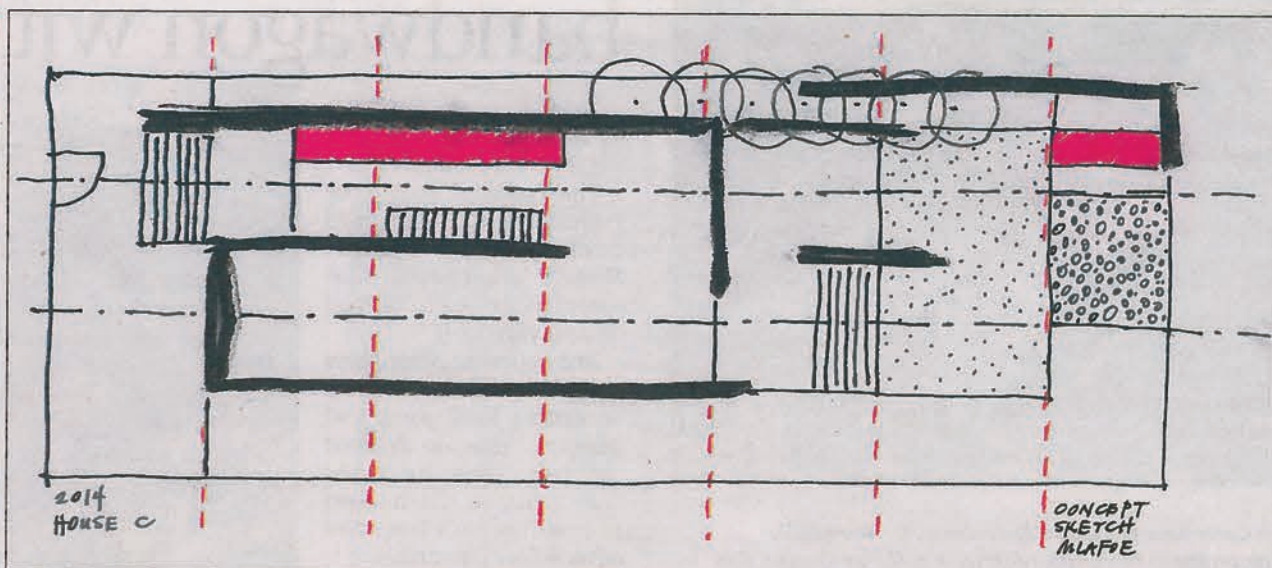
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Renderings
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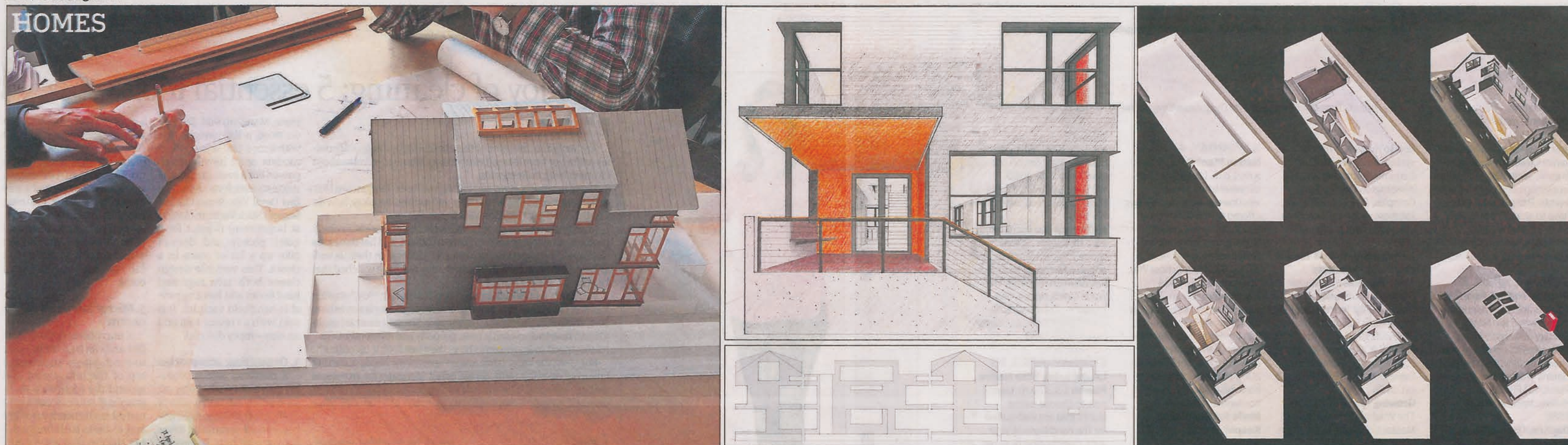
Visual aid

how their
remodel
will turn
out

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HOMES



PHOTOS COURTESY OFFICE 52 ARCHITECTURE

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT | Clients see models to help them visualize the complete construction and then talk about changes to architects at Office 52 Architecture. • This study sketch is of the front entry of the house to replace the one damaged in a fire. • Office 52 Architecture's team used lightweight foam boards to build a miniature version of the foundation and all three levels. The design study model can be taken apart, level by level. • These laser-cut profiles show the window placement of all four sides of the design. • To help the clients better visualize the outcome, the four pieces can be folded to look like the four-walled house.

3D
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By Janet Eastman
The Oregonian/
OregonLive

Architects designing your remodel, room addition or new house want you to envision changes before a wall comes down or a window goes in.

Sure, there's a lot of talk from start to finish, and piles of drawings, blueprints and other flat images are pinned to walls. These visuals make sense to designers and contractors, but not all of us are so spatially gifted.

How, then, can we know what a room or whole house will look and feel like before there's no turning back?

It can be really simple. Think about your childhood: Remember how stacks of blocks and a dollhouse could look so real?

Architect Michelle LaFoe and Isaac Campbell of Office 52 — an architecture, planning and design firm in Portland — use blocks to start the conversation with clients. As the design ideas progress, they make scaled models with windows and other details that help everyone easily see the future.

"Expecting clients to understand 2-D sectional drawings and Revit construction detail drawings in print or on a flat computer screen at meetings through-

out several months is not realistic," LaFoe said.

More of their clients, from first-time remodelers to retirees building the dream house, are asking to see physical models.

LaFoe said models — which she call "a tactile component of the design process" — can save time and money. When clients have an understanding of what the spaces and details look like, they are less likely to ask for costly last-minute changes.

Contractors can also use the models as visual aids for on-site mockups and get more information beyond the construction documents, she added.

The cost and number of models made at the architectural studio depend on the size and complexity of each project, but LaFoe's clients see the value. Bottom line: For some people, models facilitate the decision-making process.

"This expense is minor compared to what firms like ours pay to do 3-D visualization and Revit drawings for permit

and construction," LaFoe said.

Recently, LaFoe and Campbell worked with a couple who wanted to reconstruct their fire-damaged 1908 Portland four-square home.

Office 52 will host an open house April 20 during Design Week Portland. Registration required for the free event. Find out more at 2016.designweekportland.com

The clients started by emailing photos of spaces, windows and finishes they liked to LaFoe, and her firm organized and printed these on 8-foot-tall image boards.

"It is a visual exercise that allows us as architects to begin to assimilate their thoughts and translate them into a creative and coherent idea for their house," she said.

She then created freehand sketches to show how an expanded house could fit on the narrow lot. Later, other sketches helped to convey spatial compositions, interior and exterior perspectives, and everything else, down to eco-friendly materials.

Wooden blocks allowed the clients to see and talk about ways to build on the original foursquare footprint. A study

sketch was also made of the front of the house to talk about the pitch of the roof. Laser-cut profiles were created to show the window placement on all four sides of the house.

As the design became more detailed, LaFoe, Campbell and Shaun Selberg (also at Office 52) used lightweight foam boards to build a miniature version of the foundation and all three levels.

The design study model could be taken apart, level by level, so the clients could peek into a floor and imagine how furniture and people could occupy the spaces. A miniature of the house next door was made to envision how it would impact the new house's line of sight, specifically from the floor-to-ceiling windows, peek-a-boo windows and other openings.

When it was time for the clients to decide on the exterior, a model was outfitted with different types of cladding. Clients saw mockups of inside finishes, color combinations and the window trim.

Interior walls, empty spaces, textures, and even the play of light and shadow were also easy to visualize. LaFoe said models allow her team to study circulation and movement through the spaces.

Helpful, too, was picturing the relationship of the landscape and the approach to the site and structure.

LaFoe and Campbell, who won a national competition to design the new Nano-Bio-Energy Technologies Building at Carnegie Mellon University, discovered the value of using physical models when they worked in the office of architect Cesar Pelli in New Haven, Connecticut, before moving to Portland.

Some architectural firms have even built full-scale mockups of stairs and other features so clients can really envision it all. The three-dimensional fakes are made of plywood or other inexpensive materials. If something doesn't look right, it can be changed before the demolition crew shows up.

LaFoe and Campbell haven't had to resort to full-size mockups. Their small-scale models served as works in progress. The architects can cut and rearrange pieces of the models while listening to their clients' wishes.

This way, "Everyone is in agreement with what the house will look like," LaFoe said.

With the Portland foursquare, the own-

ers' kids also looked at the sketches and models when they visited. The children loved the playful peek-a-boo windows, so two of the rooms have narrow corner windows just above the floor.

Once ideas are approved using the physical models, the firm creates digital models and 3-D computer drawings.

Design and construction documents — including the site plan, house plans, architectural drawings, structural drawings and calculations from the structural engineer — were finalized for fire-damaged house in November 2014.

Construction was complete on Oct. 1, 2015, and on Oct. 3 the furnished and occupied house was on the American Institute of Architects Portland Home Tour. Hundreds of people wandered through the house, which was resurrected as a roomier, more modern six-square with a front porch and patio atop the original basement.

As tourgoers ascended the central stairwell, it was easy to see how this amplified floor plan worked for the owners and their children

jeastman@oregonian.com; 503-799-8739



FROM LEFT | A fire-damaged 1908 house in Portland was remade as a modern one that has a familiar floor plan and silhouette. This is the garden side of the house facing east. • Two of the children's rooms have narrow, corner windows just above the floor. The owners' kids also looked at the sketches and models when they visited Office 52 and fell in love with the peek-a-boo windows they saw. • The first-floor stairway, the base of the central "light space" that connects three levels of the rebuilt house. • The top floor of the house. The house was a part of the 2015 AIA Portland Home Tour. This year's tour will be held April 23.