

# Home in the holiday zone

Defined but connected spaces foster unique entertainment opportunities as well as day-to-day living comforts.



A steep lot elevates the Coopers' south Eugene home for city views in main living areas on the second level. The "great room," above, combines family/living room spaces but not the kitchen, though it is within sight just around the corner. Such separate but connected spaces promote a sense of togetherness, the couple say, yet without the noise or clutter of one room encroaching on the next.





Many others overlooked this building lot in the south Eugene hills, but for Dan and Theron Cooper it turned out just right for their “modern vintage” home with main living above and multi-generational space below. Both levels have their own driveway.



Glass French doors open to an outdoor room just off the kitchen, which serves as the “command center” for connecting all main living areas on the second level.

**By Kelly Fenley**  
**Photos by Collin Andrew**  
THE REGISTER-GUARD

**I**t was the “Rudolph” of building lots: overgrown, too exposed, overlooked by everybody who saw it. “We showed this lot to a ton of clients, and no one really liked it. It didn’t show well,” reminisces Dan Cooper, owner along with his dad, Duane, of DC Fine Homes.

Beyond tangled and steep, the south hills lot in Eugene sat on a street corner, in a peninsula shape no less — too exposed to public view for most people.

But then Cooper and his wife, Theron, considered the property for a home of their own. “The more I thought about it, I thought, ‘We can make something cool on that lot,’” Cooper says.

Ho-ho, look at it now.

Come this foggy Christmas eve, the Coopers’ 3,650-square-foot, five-bedroom, 3.5-bath home will not only shine for its soaring elevations and holiday entertainment in a novel floor plan — no kitchen clatter in this great room — it will host relatives in their own, self-contained living space with private driveway down below.

Cooper first showed his so-called “modage” house, named for blending modern, contemporary accents with vintage East Coast character, at the Tour of Homes last summer.

“The cool thing is, as people came through the house on the Tour of Homes, they would say, ‘You’ve got a really great piece of property.’ But that’s the beauty of design — there’s a design for every property,” he concludes.

Having rented for three years previous, the Coopers



Iridescent wallpaper above white wainscoting, ash floors in a dark stain, and crown moulding on the 13-foot ceiling establish traditional character in the dining room, yet with a contemporary chrome chandelier. A sliding “barn door” opens to the wine closet.

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pers knew just the home they wanted for distinct but connected living spaces, and this lot had the elevations for pulling it off.

Foremost, the steep grade allowed for upper and lower driveways to distinct zones of daily living: main living areas on the second level, and, below, to what's now a family retreat for movies and TV football, but with instant conversion potential into a full in-law suite when needed.



Friends Ava and Carson Powell give Brayden Cooper a push start in downstairs media room.

### Kitchen at the core

The home's upper entry, with garage and front door, opens to main living areas centered around what Cooper calls a "kitchen command center concept."

Unlike most modern homes, where the kitchen is included with living and dining areas, this cookery stands alone.

Traditional character shows in the tall maple cabinets, all painted white and some with glass fronts, and a real tin panel cut into the 10-foot ceiling. But for that "modage" gilding, contemporary flair includes chrome chandeliers and fixtures, backsplashes of mosaic glass tiles, and white, sparkled Caesarstone countertops of engineered quartz.

A big island invites conversations with the cook, and all the more so without competition from television or other white noise from an encroaching living room.

"The kitchen is at the core," Cooper explains, "and everything branches off of it."

One side of the kitchen angles into the separate living/family room, impressive for its city views, grand box-beam ceiling and a towering, grayish-white porcelain fireplace hearth.

Another mini-passage exposes the dining room, also anchored in tradition with iridescent wallpaper above white panels of wainscoting.

Only six to eight people can fit around the table, but a clerestory window just below the high ceiling — vaulted to 13 feet, and embellished with ornate crown moulding — helps keep the room from feeling too cavernous, as

does a wine closet with sliding barn-style door.

Yet another gathering space, this one straight off the kitchen through glass French doors within a wall of windows, harbors outdoor living.

Sheltered from the weather save for open air above a half-wall rock fireplace hearth, the outdoor room stays warm and cozy on all but the coldest and stormiest days. A flat-screen TV mounts on one of the two board-and-batten side walls; wicker furnishings rest on porcelain tile floors.

"We sit out here and watch games," Cooper says. "Monday night football is a big thing. We're big Seahawks fans, so if a Seahawks game is on, a lot of times we'll end up here. It's so easy to go in and out with food, take it right to the sink and go back out."

Conversely, the kitchen — with its piles of dirty dishes — can be abandoned after dinner.

"I can't relax if I see dishes in the sink," Theron confesses. "But here, I can make a big meal, then come into the living room and pretend my dishes are all clean."

Cooper actually refers to the living/family room as a "great room," more like those found in homes before modern-day floor plans began incorporating kitchens around the 1990s. Yet he still wanted lines of sight from each living space into the command kitchen.

"We wanted separation," he says of the home's floor plan, which was designed by his own firm, DC Design. "But we wanted everyone to be close to each other. It definitely accomplishes that."



Duane Cooper, left, and Tyler Nice with his son, Solomon, at the downstairs kitchenette.

### Instant in-law suite

For now, the Coopers — Dan, Theron, daughter Aubrie, 16, and 2-year-old Brayden — are using their downstairs suite for family entertainment.

"It's kind of fun, because there's something about going 'sub-earth.' We put the baby to bed and say, 'Hey, let's watch a movie.' And no one knows we're down here," Cooper says.

Come Sunday, the suite becomes Cooper's "Dan Cave," as he calls it. No



Dan (at left) and Theron Cooper (top) entertain friends Tanya Powell and Shane Finley in the second-floor outdoor room with rock-hearth fireplace and flat-screen TV on board-and-batten wall.



Porcelain fireplace hearth, with vertical grains in a waterfall design, stokes the "modage" (modern vintage) theme in the great room with both vintage and contemporary-style furnishings.

movies play on the main room's big projection screen, but an NFL RedZone package delivers multiple games on demand. In the kitchenette, two flat-screen TVs pipe in yet two more NFL games.

For mood, there's Dan's framed collections of Seahawks memorabilia. LED downlighting can be programmed to show various team colors on the main room's walls.

Yet the suite, with its own driveway and separate entrance, was designed primarily for guests and possibly in-law quarters one day. A bedroom and full bath round out the 1,100-square-foot

space. Once a bonus room with another bedroom is finished on the home's third level, the Coopers will have still more multi-generational quarters.

"We felt that was a niche in the market that was really important to create, because there are a lot of people who have elderly parents coming to live with them, but they still want some separation of space," he says.

For them, it helped to have just the right lot for it all — a Rudolph or not.

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