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# A MODERN RiNovation

A FORMER HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOME IN RiNo GOES FROM HELPING ITS FORMER OWNERS BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY TO GETTING A LITTLE HELP OF ITS OWN IN THE FORM OF A MODERN UPDATE.

**WORDS:** *Gen Hicks*

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** *James Florio & Kyle Deutmeyer*

**I**n today's development climate where single-family infill opportunities are rare, homes like the one at 2449 Lawrence, in the RiNo neighborhood, are typically seen as tear-downs since the land that they sit upon is more valuable than the home itself. As one of Denver's hottest neighborhoods, the area has seen an influx of businesses giving the existing low-rise industrial buildings new life, while most of the new construction pays homage to the existing urban fabric of concrete, metal and wood.

Originally a Habitat for Humanity build, 2449 Lawrence was completed in 1999 for a single mother, providing her with a safe and affordable home where she could raise her family. With 15 years of equity in the property and the children off on their own, she was able to sell and accomplish her dream: a new life in the mountains. Through home ownership, the cycle of poverty for her family has ended.

Enter Jack Betts and Jerrod Johnson. They bought the home in 2014, deciding to realize their personal vision for the existing property. Owen Beard of Solid Architecture and Jonas DiCaprio of Design Platform helped the couple turn the house into a well-executed example of urban renovation.

Back when the neighborhood was still called Five Points, the home was built as affordable housing by Habitat for Humanity. The new owners maximized the 25' x 125' lot by stretching the house into an open shotgun floor plan and modernizing the original pitched roofline with a standing seam black metal roof.



## A MODERN RiNovation



Jerrod Johnson, a Colorado native and real estate investor, has been remodeling homes in Denver since 2010 and heard about the property through one of his subcontractors. After the couple purchased the home, they quickly began the design process. Jerrod had managed the renovation of their last home, but for this project they wanted a design/build team. "We had an idea of what we wanted to do," says Jack. "Jerrod had some subcontractors that he wanted to use and we had already decided to pick the finishes ourselves."

Internet searches led them to Solid Architecture and architect Owen Beard. Beard guided the couple through the design development phase of the project. The overall program included the addition of 1,000 square feet, expanding both floors of the home, and elongating the original footprint towards the

**MUCH LIKE THE SURROUNDING URBAN ENVIRONMENT, THE INTERIOR FINISHES JUXTAPOSE THE OLD AND NEW, ROUGH AND SMOOTH, NATURAL AND INDUSTRIAL.**



In the newly open kitchen, the contrast of the white and black finishes is softened with the use of natural walnut for the open shelving and 14" raw edge walnut island countertop fabricated by Ben Dogitz. The wood was sourced locally at Vintage Wood Supply in Leadville and Denver furniture designers And Collaborative created the custom barstools.



street. An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) was added above the garage, shielding the main residence from surrounding development. Design Platform, led by Jonas DiCaprio, was engaged to manage a hybrid team of subcontractors selected for the project through construction completion. DiCaprio utilized his design talent to produce detail drawings, finalize Jack's hand-drawn landscape plans, and refine the client's finish selections.

Much like the surrounding urban environment, the interior finishes juxtapose the old and new, rough and smooth, natural and industrial. You enter an intimate front garden defined by a board-formed concrete wall and painted wood fencing. Concrete flooring throughout the ground floor extends into the outdoor spaces at both the front and back of the house creating an indoor/outdoor living experience. The living room is at the

same grade as the front porch, defining the space within the open floor plan. A few stairs and a dual-sided metal fireplace separate the living room from the dining room. A raw edge walnut kitchen island, serving as both a preparation and entertaining surface, is the central feature of the kitchen.

La Cantina folding doors open from the kitchen to the back yard, really an outdoor living and dining area, and outside, the living space mimics the interior with a board-formed concrete fireplace and several steps separating the lounge from the eating and grilling space. Thoughtfully placed aspen trees and bamboo provide privacy around this outdoor urban oasis. Native grasses are arranged in low-maintenance gravel gardens and in slim metal planter walls, deflecting street noise and delineating the outdoor space. →77

Local craftsman Chris Medal, of CM Steel, is responsible for the metal work throughout the home and outdoor spaces. His custom double-sided fireplace is the central feature in the living and dining areas. Works by Colorado artists Lui Ferreyra (living room) and Joel Swanson (dining room) flank the steel fireplace. The blue tones of the Saba Italia chairs and the dining room rug (found at fab.com) bring just the right amount of color into the space.



A MODERN  
RiNovation

The accessory dwelling unit (ADU) above the two-car garage is currently used as a guest space. The studio apartment has the same white oak floors as the main house and is outfitted with a Murphy bed, efficiency kitchen, and full bathroom. Above, a rooftop deck features a hot tub, lounge chairs, and several more steel planters with trees and grasses providing privacy from the surrounding neighborhood and it's ongoing construction.



## A MODERN RiNovation



The house has an elegant symmetry about it; the indoor and outdoor living spaces mirror each other and large architectural features along the centerline of the house define the “rooms” throughout the first floor. The lighting, also right down the center of the building, defines the interior spaces. Modern pendants by Cedar & Moss highlight the kitchen island and a brass chandelier hovers above the dining room table.

Landscaping services were provided by Brandon Olson of Olson Lawn Care. He carefully chose the low-maintenance, yet lush, trees and grasses found in the gravel gardens and custom steel planters around the home’s exterior. Like in the other spaces in the home, the outdoor furniture is an eclectic mix: a custom dining table designed by the homeowners, modern BluDot dining chairs and a sleek grey sectional from Modway Furniture.







Bright pops of color punctuate the ground floor living spaces; the yellow front door is cheery and inviting, a cerulean blue bar with its brass floating shelves gives off a playful modern vibe, and funky aqua and scarlet patio chairs accent the cool grey and white color scheme.

The original staircase remained in place, but a perforated metal screen was added to separate the stairs from the living area downstairs and define the hallway upstairs. On the second floor, light grey stained white oak floors imitate the concrete found below. Large, square windows at the front and back of the house allow light infiltration into the office and create a tree house feeling in the master bedroom. The master bathroom is masculine, with slate tile flooring throughout, extending up the walls of the shower. River rock was used on the shower floor for additional texture, adding another dimension to the dark grey color palette.

The exterior of the home is clad in dark metal and distressed wood. Z Craft, a Colorado company specializing in architectural metal work, is responsible for the elegant standing seam black metal gabled roof and siding. The barn wood found around the square windows and on the front and back porches was sourced from old tobacco storage barns. Gravel gardens replaced grass and the new, low-maintenance yards blend seamlessly into the surrounding neighborhood.

Jack and Jerrod realized their dreams for this RiNo property; a home that once gave opportunity to an underprivileged family, now has new life in one of Denver's most vibrant communities. This renovation quietly blends into its surroundings because of its respect for the existing urban aesthetic. The metal, wood, and concrete at 2449 Lawrence is functional first, but superbly executed to reflect the refined design vision of the owners. ■

In the master suite, which is part of the addition, the ceiling rafters are raised into the gabled roof. This central dramatic architectural detail is the focus, in contrast with the sleek, simple finishes. The spaces are refined and furnishings are sparse, creating a quiet retreat in the trees.