

# Finding Home

Working with Rena Spangler

BY ELLEN DONKER

**K**ate Smith-Cooper was hoping the big house on Prospect Street would satisfy her husband David's three criteria. He said he would move if: One – the new home was within five blocks of their current home; Two – it had land to build on; and Three – it was move-in ready.

As soon as Kate stepped through the front door, her heart sank. The house had been well lived-in and showed the wear and tear and accumulation that came with raising nine children in the 70s. It would need extensive renovation.

Still, Kate wanted David to see it. She cautiously walked him through the house and, much to her relief, he fell in love with it. It had the space their growing family needed and the land to add an apartment for his aging father. Kate says, "David and I have been in business together for 20 years and our motto is 'say yes to everything and figure it out later.'" With the help of the listing agent, Rena Spangler, that's what they did.

"It went as smoothly as it could possibly go," Kate says about the purchase. "I felt we had a partner in her and that she was going to do the absolute best for us and for them."



Of course, this meant they had to sell their home on Sommer Avenue. Having seen how skillfully Spangler had satisfied both sides of their Prospect Street purchase, they asked her to handle this sale, too. Rena recommended some renovations to the kitchen and staged the house with meticulous attention to detail. The house sold right away for a great price.

Since the Prospect Street house



*The Cooper-Smith family and dog Sammy.*

was under renovation, the Smith-Cooper family needed to find a temporary home to accommodate their three kids, two cats and a dog. That place turned out to be a two-bedroom apartment in a house they had owned for many years on Brookwood Drive. The space was tight, but they stayed there for two school years. Kate says, "We rallied as a family."

During that time, they took the Prospect Street house down to the studs in every room except the front room. "The project was so enormous I don't think we had any idea what we were getting ourselves into," recalls Kate. They added a couple hundred square feet in the back of the house for a larger kitchen and an upstairs master suite, as well as 850 square feet for David's father's apartment.

Wanting the house to look as original as possible, the Smith-Coopers repurposed as many materials from the demolition as possible. They reused wood, moldings, and old doors even if they looked worn or didn't close properly. Because the first floor has a lot of dark wood, they told the architect they wanted to brighten the house with natural light and be able to see outside no matter

where they were in the house.

For the kitchen they chose custom cabinets, high-end appliances and lighting from Green Demolitions, a luxury recycler. Kate says, "It felt really good to do it that way because some of the money goes back to families of people in rehab."

A year after the family moved into the Prospect Street house, the Smith-Coopers turned to Spangler's expertise once again: this time to sell their Brookwood Drive house. Throughout all the sales, Kate says, "Rena was like my spirit animal. She's so steady and calm. I always felt I was in capable hands."

Spangler reflects on the three sales she's guided the Smith-Cooper family through and says, "In my profession, you can either focus on big numbers of one-off transactions or you can create true partnerships that last a lifetime. My satisfaction comes from collaborating with clients to achieve what they need, want and love."

Kate adds, "She's become a staple in our life. Even the dog loves her."