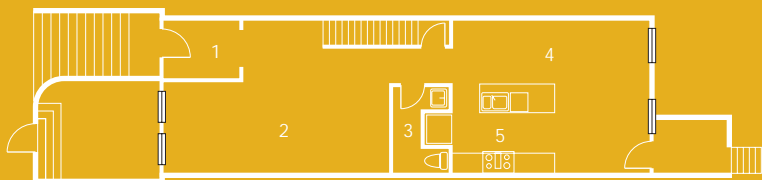


Renovation Tip v

What the Pros Know About Railings

"We were told that solid side paneling for our central stairway would be very hip and happening," says Zimmermann. "But I thought that would have been incredibly claustrophobic. I'm a stainless-steel freak, so my own idea was to run a stainless-steel railing up three flights to the roof door, giving a sense of unity." A budget-busting fabrication bid, including installation, came in at \$30,000. Rejecting a more modest proposal—a standard wood railing—Zimmermann got a still-too-high bid on stainless-steel cable strung under wood hand-rails between upright dowels. Then, using her "common sense," she says, "I told my contractor to go to Home Depot to buy cable, turnbuckles and standard-size timber." Those materials cost about \$300. With installation, the wood-and-stainless railings (see page 146), which lend their own airiness to the interior, cost under \$5,000.



1. Entry
2. Living Room
3. Bathroom
4. Dining Room
5. Open Kitchen

Tethered

to a modest budget, Zimmermann invented freely. She upscaled basic bedroom and kitchen cabinets from Home Depot and Ikea by outfitting them with sleek European Häfele hardware. Having "practically memorized" the catalog of Artemide, her favorite lighting source, she loaded up a minivan with 150 fixtures from the firm's biannual warehouse sale. Her haul even included a pair of oval-contoured lamps to flank the entrance door. And when contractor bids for a modernist stairway railing topped her bottom line, she improvised at Home Depot (see box).

The couple also enjoy a sense of community in their new home, as well as the view of the neighborhood from their rooftop terrace, from which they catch the occasional glimpse of former president Bill Clinton's silhouette through the windows of his 125th Street office. One afternoon, while Zimmermann and Downie were lounging on the roof, they caught the aroma of frying Jamaican meat patties wafting from the kitchen of a nearby apartment. As the cook glanced their way, Downie called out, "Smells wonderful!" That evening, the buzzer rang. It was the cook, holding out a plate of those aromatic patties for the newest neighbors on the block.

Zimmermann and Downie are happy to reciprocate. Soon after moving in, they started Renaissance in Motion, a series of cultural happenings in their home. One evening last fall, what sounded like a recording of legendary singer Eartha Kitt drifted over the block. But there, framed in the couple's open living room window, was the performer herself, singing for the neighborhood. 🎤

See Resources, last pages.