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## New & Improved Home

### Finely Finished

*An eight-week makeover turns a 1950s Kailua home into a modern Island party house.*

By Laurie Okawa Moore

People pass this unassuming house on South Kainalu Drive unaware of the tropical treat behind its double doors. A "hidden treasure" is what real estate broker Sakara Blackwell calls this freshly remodeled kamaaina home in Kailua.

The house was built in 1954 and later renovated by previous owners in 1986. Blackwell recently bought the house and had it fully remodeled. This U-shaped single-family home boasts 2,770 square feet of living space on a level 11,050-square-foot lot. According to Blackwell, this 3-bedroom, 2.5-bath house could easily accommodate a family, but she remodeled it with a vacation or second-home buyer in mind. "This is a great party house," Blackwell says. "With the pool, large kitchen and home theater ... this house is perfect to entertain in."

"My husband and I actually purchased this house to live in," explains Blackwell, who is president and principal broker of Optimum Realty LLC. "But once I started the brokerage, we decided we needed to stay in town." The Blackwells finished the remodeling and put the house on the market to showcase their secondary business, Optimum Island Design, which provides design services to real estate clients who want to have their houses styled and ready to show.



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The open floor plan flows between rooms, such as shown here with the kitchen connected to the dining room, living room and home theater, with the tie-back curtains. Photos by Macario. Featured Designer: Sakara K. Blackwell, of Optimum Island Design

"This is a walk-to-the-beach property, which is important in Kailua," says Blackwell. The house takes advantage of the sea breeze and sunlight with its large casement windows. Newly installed, wood-framed, glass double doors also usher in lots of outside light.

"When I bought this house, the interior was dark and had an ugly, 1970s, old-school look," Blackwell says. "And no one could figure out what to do with this one big empty room, which we turned into the custom media room."

Blackwell had a Polk Audio home theater system installed, including a 106-inch projection screen and surround-sound speaker system. The room is furnished with bleached wood and white canvas lounge chairs, while the low window seat is accented with silk cushions created by Blackwell's partner, Atmosphere designer Holly Surya.

The gourmet kitchen was a must for entertaining, so Blackwell made it the hub of activity. It features ample granite counters and a large kitchen island. Blackwell chose to keep the custom European, pantry-style cabinets from the original 1980s remodel, but had them refaced and updated with brushed stainless steel hardware. Blackwell says that the new stainless steel Jenn-Aire appliances, including a double-convection oven and an electric cook top, are nice compromises between industrial, restaurant-style equipment and ordinary home appliances. The subdued painted walls play off the earth-tone granite countertops and sand-colored porcelain tile floors.

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With jalousie and casement windows framing the house, the cobalt-blue tiled pool is visible from practically every room. The pool deck can be entered from four different rooms, making it a central part of the house.

The open floor plan connects the kitchen to the dining room, which overlooks the backyard, L-shaped gazebo and newly tiled pool and spa. The dining room leads to the modernly furnished, formal living room. While remodeling, the living room's outdated coral fireplace was redone in smooth travertine stone. Flanked by casement windows, which draw in the cooling trade winds, the fireplace is now the focal point of the room.

The master bedroom will make you whimper. It's geared toward a happy couple, with his and her wardrobes hidden behind floor-to-ceiling mirrored doors on either side of the bed. Above the bed hangs a dominant oil painting by local Kailua artist Linda Briggs. The abstract painting mirrors the jellybean shape of the pool, which is just outside of the bedroom's double-glass doors.

Blackwell made very few structural changes to the house, but she did erect a new wall between the master bedroom and bath for added privacy.

The master bathroom has the air of a Japanese hot springs inn. Two large, glass sink bowls float in a wood countertop. The shower features a river-rock floor, a ceiling-mounted rain fixture, plus his and her wall-mounted showerheads.



The master bedroom, with his and hers wardrobes hidden behind floor-to-ceiling mirrored doors, opens up to the backyard through double glass doors. Plus, the master bathroom (to the left), with floating sinks and river-rock floors, can be opened up to the backyard for a spa-like experience.

Just a few steps outside the house is a back yard made for poolside parties. The pool and spa were refinished with shimmering cobalt blue tiles. The gazebo features lights, ceiling fans and running water. From the half-bath in the house, there is easy access to an outdoor shower for pre-swim or post-beach rinsing.

Blackwell notes that the people who have expressed strong interest in the house see the house's party potential. "Since we originally bought this house with the idea of living in it ourselves," she smiles, "I promised myself that I would have at least one pool party here before we close escrow."

### Suppliers

Interior Design & Furnishings:

Optimum Island Design,

Sakara K. Blackwell, president.

Holly Surya, designer.

Carpet Installation: Certified Installers

Custom Home Theatre: Connected House

Dining Room Rug: Hanalei Bay Designs at Details Gallery

Electrician: Ewa Lighting Services

Fence Installation: Habilitat

Garage Door: Raynor Pacific Overhead Doors Ltd.

Granite Counter Installation: Tuxpan Marble & Granite

Kitchen Cabinet Refacing: Essential Cabinet & Refacing Inc.

Landscaping: Reliable Landscaping & Sprinklers

Pool Tiling: Pua Aina Pools

Stone & Granite: Selective Stone and Marblehaus Hawaii

Tile: Dal-Tile

Tile Installation: Emmet Akao

Wood Floor Installation: Fox Flooring