

Joost Ringeling and Meike Beeren took advantage of a special municipal subsidy to shore up the foundation of their 1910 South Amsterdam home, saving money for additional renovations. An exposed support beam displays their children's magnet collection.

Architect Mark van der Geest preserved the home's historic facade (opposite, top). In the kitchen, which is housed in an earlier addition, they added windows to warm the interiors. The chalkboard paint (opposite, bottom) is a hit with the children.



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EUROPE

JMP House

A Dutch family does an urban version of a front lawn.

The search for a child-friendly home with ample outdoor space often leads young families out of the city toward greener pastures. But for Joost Ringeling and Meike Beeren, who work in Amsterdam and have two children, the quest brought them just to the other side of town.

Instead of a cookie-cutter home in the suburbs, the couple snatched up an abandoned two-unit building near the city's Vondelpark. It was a fixer-upper, to be sure, but the location offered a postcard Amsterdam experience: an extra-wide sidewalk that could be transformed into a semi-private terrace.

Joost and Meike hired architect Mark van der Geest to refurbish the building, which dates to 1910, and unite the apartments. The

foundation was in such poor condition that they had to replace every floor and wall, except the traditional brick facade, which was painstakingly restored. Because most of the budget went toward repairing the foundation, the architect opted to leave the interior materials as unfinished and elemental as possible. The floor is poured concrete and the plaster walls are not painted.

Restoring the home took plenty of patience and sweat equity, but the family finally has their outdoor enclave, a front-row seat alongside the storybook cafes on their block. Here, Joost and Meike like to gather to eat, drink, and unwind with their friends, children, and neighbors. It's not quite a front yard, but in a city as dense as Amsterdam, it's pretty close. □