

Backfill

Hidden Hatch

Unwilling to sacrifice floor space to a standard stairwell in an already compact floor plan, architect Richard Morongell designed and built this custom hatch cover (1). Located in front of a kitchen counter — a natural conversation area — it easily supports six adults without deflection.

Morongell kept the 185-pound cover relatively light and compact by building it around a Hexacomb core, a kraft-paper honeycomb panel (2) typically sold as a

protective packaging material (877/692-6163, hexacomb.com). The hatch practically floats open on a pair of inexpensive gas springs (3), each with a 100-pound lift capacity (330/342-6100, mcmaster.com). The springs also exert a dampening effect on the closing force, ensuring a quiet landing.

Closed, the nearly invisible hatch is supported on steel angles bolted to the floor framing and concealed by finish trim. — *Dave Holbrook*

