

Polishing an Urban Gem

The original style and proportions of this in-town home inspired its amazing transformation. By **Julia Hamilton**

Vinyl cladding once hid the original beveled wood siding on this American foursquare. This style of house was built throughout the country between 1890 and the 1930s. Its boxy proportions yielded four main rooms on each level, a plan that was practical for construction on city lots, such as this narrow yet deep site in the Ashton Heights neighborhood of Arlington, Virginia.

Gaining Space The owners of the 1910 wood frame house, Joanne and Kevin Sweeney, decided to renovate and expand it to meet the needs of their family of six. The generous depth of the lot enabled their architects, Gregory Wiedemann and Felix Gonzalez of Wiedemann Architects in Bethesda, Maryland, to design the spacious two-story addition that was built at the rear. It's the accomplished manner in which the addition preserves the original appearance of the house from the street, while providing the needed living space, that elevates this home to winning status. The renovation highlights the character and integrity of the historic home.

The addition substantially expands it and adds modern conveniences.

The new portion of the first floor holds a kitchen, family room, and dining area; a master bedroom suite and sitting room occupy the second floor. Each of the existing rooms also underwent renovation, including the original attic which was converted into a fifth bedroom/office. The work took 18 months to complete.

Details Matter To differentiate between the old and new construction, Gregory and Felix varied some of the surface finishes and design details. Beside the exterior door to the kitchen, wall areas are surfaced in pebble dash (a masonry technique in which pebbles are broadcast onto wet stucco). Also, the addition is clad with lap siding that's wider than the material used on the original house. The new portion is oriented so that there's space for a side terrace beneath the massive oak trees preserved during construction. To return the exterior to its original look, the vinyl cladding was removed and siding that was typical of foursquares was applied. ●



Smart Choices

Throughout the project, consideration was given to energy efficiency and conservation.

- Salvaged antique heart pine was used for the floors and stairs.
- The builder framed the walls with engineered lumber, a product manufactured from high-grade wood fiber.
- To reduce heat loss, all windows and doors have dual-thickness, low-E argon-filled glazing.
- Low-flow showerheads, Energy Star appliances, and compact fluorescent lightbulbs reduce waste.

LEFT: The exterior color palette and use of mixed materials is characteristic of early-20th-century houses. ABOVE, RIGHT: A deck steps down from the kitchen's entrance. The box bay window frames the breakfast table.



before



Comfort With Character

Family living for the Sweeneys is perfected in this smart design.

To create greater ceiling height in Joanne and Kevin's kitchen and family room, Gregory and Felix made the floor level in these areas several steps lower than the original house. A wooden framework—containing cabinetry, the refrigerator, and an interior doorway—marks the transition between old and new.

Details such as beaded-board panels and glass fronts on the cabinets bring a vintage appeal to the kitchen, especially when paired with the wooden countertops. Because the house stands close to its neighbors, the architects placed transom windows above cabinets on a sidewall for light and privacy. Door and window casings from the existing rooms were copied in the new areas.

The homeowners wanted the family room to look and live like an inviting cabin. It features a fireplace constructed

of Pennsylvania fieldstone. The floors are a high grade of antique pine without many knots. Built-ins mirror the kitchen cabinets. The Sweeneys use the adjacent breakfast table for casual meals, homework, and Monopoly marathons. ●



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FAR LEFT: Cleverly placed transom windows admit light. Beaded-board fronts and tall crown molding lend an aged look to the cabinets. **LEFT:** The fieldstone fireplace evokes a rustic cabin. **ABOVE:** On the exterior, the backs of the built-in shelves in the family room are flush with the chimney. Exposed rafter tails mirror those on the kitchen's box bay (pictured on page 80).