

Chicago

Love where
you live

HOMES + GARDEN

MAKEOVERS!

30+
PAGES OF TIPS,
TRENDS, AND
TRANSFORMATIONS

FRESH
SPRING
ACCESSORIES

YOUR OWN
MEDITATION
GARDEN



MARCH/APRIL 2011

U.S. \$4.99



chicagohomemag.com

LONGMAN & EAGLE
STEAL THE LOOK!

Wenge cabinets, Egyptian limestone countertops, and copper Artichoke lamps combine elegance and modern informality in the kitchen. The front of the house is more traditional in style than the rear, where large commercial windows offer a view of the backyard.



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

He likes wide-open modern spaces; she likes creaky floors and “real rooms.” Their ingeniously redone house in a historic district pleases them both

BY LISA SKOLNIK PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATRINA WITTKAMP STYLING BY CYNTHIA McCULLOUGH



OPPOSITES ATTRACT, WHICH CAN CREATE SOME INTRIGUING COMPROMISES ON THE HOME FRONT.

"My husband wanted to live in a stainless-steel-and-concrete number, and I wanted an old landmark building with creaky floors," says a banker-turned-stay-at-home-mom who grew up in Evanston, in a house from the 1860s. "So I said, 'What if we find an old place and restore the outside, then gut the inside?' Then we'd both get some of what we wanted."

The idea appealed to her husband, who works in West Town, so a search ensued for an old house close to his office. After many near misses, their real-estate agent e-mailed them a listing for a once-elegant, now-dilapidated Italianate on a double lot. "I knew immediately it was the one," the wife says. They put an offer on it within two weeks.

The house, in the center of the Wicker Park Historic Landmark District, had been converted at some point into a two-flat and was, frankly, a wreck; a rundown garage didn't help matters. The location meant the street-side façade of the house had to remain the same—not a problem for architects Julie Fisher and Rachel Crowl of fcStudio, who have done several projects like this in the district. "We add the modern interventions at the rear and inside," Crowl says.

The couple's needs and aesthetic disparities added another layer of challenges. The wife agreed to turn the back porch into a sleek addition, have the garage rebuilt, and give the yard a makeover. But inside, she wanted gracious architectural detailing and "real rooms." The husband was hoping for loftlike openness, though with a home office that provided both privacy and access to the family action.

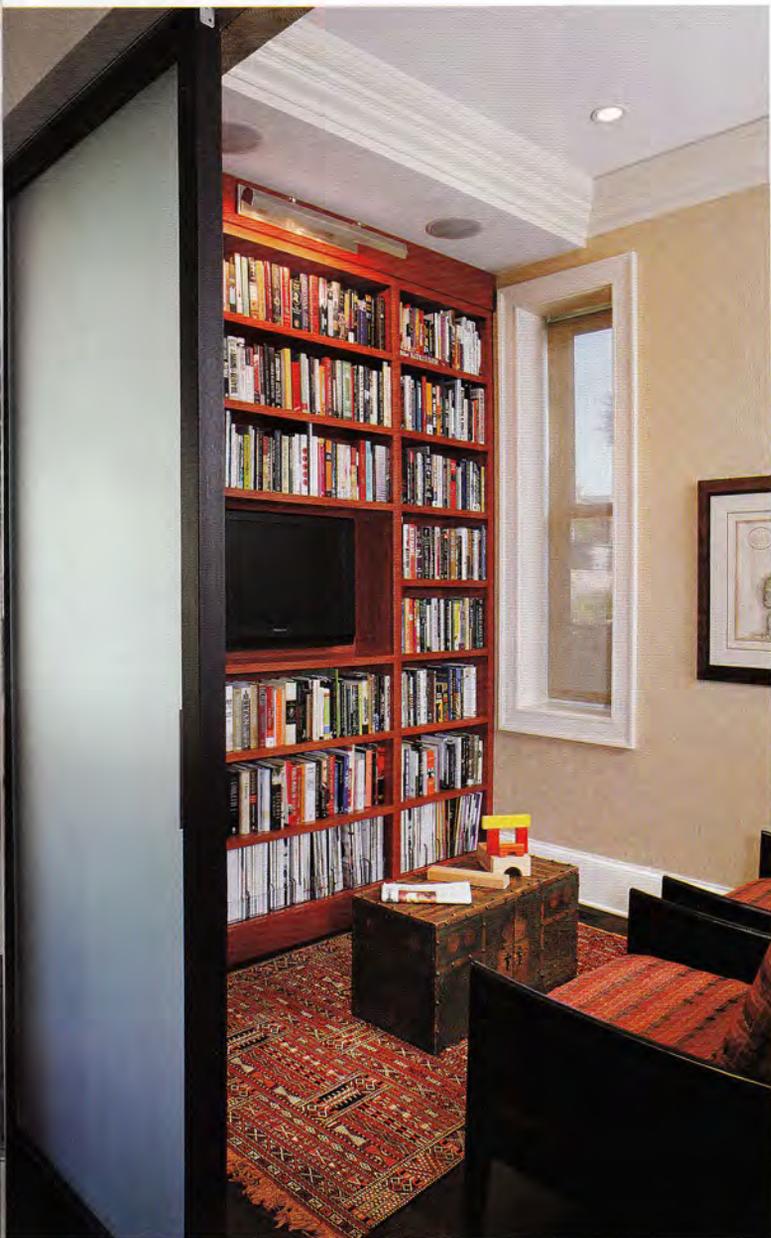
The architects used three gestures inside to achieve these goals. First, custom-milled architectural trim on all walls, doors, windows, and the new main staircase pay homage to both styles. These elements "have the grand scale of their traditional counterparts but are cleaner and more modern, so they feel lighter," Crowl says.

Next, the open layout for the first floor is supremely flexible. Except for the kitchen—an Italian affair that is both stately for her and sleek for him—all the spaces are transmutable, their functions determined by furnishings, which can change, rather than by architecture. "We use the front space for a formal living room and family area, but it could also be a formal dining room," points out the wife.

Finally, the architects outlined the home office with frosted glass sliding doors so it could be closed off when necessary for privacy and quiet. It could also serve as a guest room or craft area in the future. Or not.

"It took us three years to get to this point, and it's finally perfect for us and our daughter," says the wife. "We don't want to change a thing."

Resources: See Buy Guide, page 134.



Frosted glass Poliform doors close off a home office outfitted with custom bookshelves stained a bold red. **OPPOSITE** Vintage chairs from The Golden Triangle and a custom table accommodate both family meals and entertaining.



"The homeowner always knew she wanted a two-sided custom storage cabinet as a room divider, so it was part of the architectural program from day one," says Fisher.





CUSTOM-MILLED ARCHITECTURAL TRIM
AND A NEW MAIN STAIRCASE HONOR
BOTH MODERN AND TRADITIONAL STYLES.

The new garage is finished with Brazilian ipe. **BELOW LEFT** The façade of the house, in the Wicker Park Historic Landmark District. **OPPOSITE** The backyard, with zones for cooking, dining, relaxing, and play, was designed around a stately old pear tree.



GARAGE BEFORE

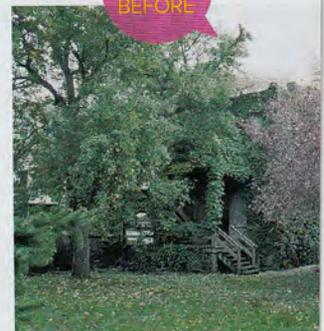


BEHIND THE SCENES

Exterior Renovation

“Old” (in front) and “new” (in back) are relative terms; both parts of the house required extensive design work. In front, the masonry, windows, and entryway were restored to their original look. In back, materials and design elements used in the two-story addition and in the original house were carried through to the garage to unite the two structures. Brazilian ipe, a dense hardwood often used for decks, was incorporated in both places at the suggestion of the wife, who likes its rich grain and durability. Chicago common brick, visible on the side-walls of the house, was also used for the garage. Minimalist steel railings designed to complement the new back of the house are echoed in steel awnings over the back door and the garage entrance.

REAR EXTERIOR BEFORE









DETAILS

1. One wall of the nursery features a cheerful monkey-themed wallcovering; the rest of the room was painted Farrow & Ball Dayroom Yellow to match. The multihued rug is from The Red Balloon. **2.** To give the fireplace star status, the architects designed a majestic yet streamlined honed-granite surround topped with an oak mantel. Over it hangs a graphic vintage poster. **3.** The child's (and guest) bathroom is both waterproof and pretty, with walls clad in a striking sea-blue glass tile. **4.** A large mudroom has custom cabinetry for storage, a terrazzo tile floor that's impervious to water, and a dog shower—though the family has yet to get a dog.