

traditional updates



With an accent

These homes combine classic charms with an altogether more contemporary edge



Before



In the frame

This grand home has been reshuffled and optimized for modern life – a touch of industrial chic informs the spaces

When it comes to traditional house remodels there can often be a design disconnect. Owners may fall for a home's grand, historic exteriors but are less fond of the claustrophobic runs of rooms and poorly oriented living spaces that are also hallmarks of architectural times gone by.

This was the scenario for the owners of a 1920s residence remodeled by architect William Massey. The owners loved the home's grand lines and brick and limestone facade but not so much the dark, cramped interiors, says Massey.

"In terms of exterior work, the facades were repointed and the home expanded with a new

open porch and pergola at the rear and a new deck off the upstairs master suite. Otherwise we stayed within the home's original footprint.

"Inside, the remodeling was comprehensive with all three levels reworked. New spaces were added to the underused basement, including a gymnasium, games room and media room. However this project is more about the first and second floors, which were extensively updated.

"Remodelling issues with older interiors are often about light and space. The formal rooms traditionally looked to the front of a home but suffered from poor connections to the rear."



Before

Preceding pages: In this project, the exteriors were refreshed and the rear of the home opened to the back yard.

Above left and left: The entry and living areas have glass and steel frames as a modern insertion. Heavy wood work was replaced.

Legend: 1 entry, 2 hall, 3 living, 4 sitting, 5 dining, 6 study, 7 kitchen, 8 pantry, 9 bathroom, 10 sunroom, 11 mudroom, 12 breakfast room, 13 laundry, 14 bedroom, 15 porch.





Preceding pages: Taking a cue from an existing arched opening, Massey broadened several connections between the living spaces, to set up oblique sightlines across the home.

Above and right: The living room has been transformed into a light, welcoming space. The brick fireplace now features a marble fire surround, echoing the use of this material at the entry. Dark cabinetry has been replaced with light-toned cabinets and open shelving.



Before

“Interiors were often cluttered and clogged by an excess of small ancillary spaces. Getting around them was time consuming and natural light often could not penetrate and flow through the generous public spaces.”

To address these issues on the first floor, the architect stripped out a central bathroom and several closets. In their place, a stair and rear hall improve pedestrian connections and light flow. The living room, sitting room and dining area remain in the same place, but the connections between these spaces were improved, creating vistas through the home and

further enhancing light penetration.

The kitchen was moved to the other side of the home, replacing the master bedroom which is now in the former second-floor attic. A breakfast room and sunny laundry were added at the rear corners – replacing a sunroom and mud room. The hallway between leads out to the newly added covered porch for a seamless connection to the rear yard.

Upstairs, another bedroom and the master suite were added. The new master bedroom opens to a deck that had been a roof. This was achieved by removing a gable window,

expanding the opening and introducing French doors in its place. Rooms at this level were set back in under the roofline, where possible, to optimize room heights – one owner is quite tall.

“In terms of the look for the interiors, we began by stripping all the original wall plaster, which had sagged over time, and swapped out the existing dark oak window surrounds. The mouldings and baseboards were replaced with standard traditional forms that suited the house but were not as oppressive visually. Large dark beams in the dining room were also taken out, greatly lightening the space.”

Top: The corner sitting room had been under used in the original design. The architect opened the space up the adjacent living room and added a bookcase for warmth.

Above: Walnut kitchen cabinets are separated from the oak floors by stainless steel toe-kicks. The quartzite countertops and backsplash were chosen as they offer visual interest without overwhelming the space.”



Architect: William Massey AIA, Massey Associates Architects (Chicago)
Interior design: David MacKenzie
Kitchen designer: William Massey
Cabinet company: All Seasons Woodwork
Builder: WZ Home Improvement
Structural engineer: Sound Structures
Doors and windows: Marvin
Flooring: 4in rift white oak, clear seal
Paints: Benjamin Moore
Lighting: Halo, recessed
Heating: Carrier
Steel window walls: Series 500 by A&S Window Associates
Kitchen cabinetry: Walnut and quartered brown elm
Countertops: Luca di Luna Quartzite statuary marble and engineered stone
Kitchen sink: Elkay
Faucets: Tara by Dornbracht
Oven, cooktop, ventilation, microwave: Wolf
Refrigeration: Thermador
Dishwasher: Miele
Waste disposal: Kitchenaid

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Above: The new upstairs double bedroom has its own deck, space reclaimed from a central roof. Two other roofs, slightly lower to left and right, are roofed in black stone, like a Japanese garden, solely for the eyes of those standing out on the deck.

Right: Low room heights under the eaves were a consideration in terms of room layouts upstairs, including in this child's bedroom with the lowest point given over to a seating nook.



“The entry hall’s porcelain floors and marble walls create a sense of arrival that’s in keeping with the exterior,” says Massey. “And it is right from the front entry that you are greeted by a key accent in this design – two contemporary, industrial-look steel and glass freestanding walls. The screen at the entry is repeated at the edge of the adjacent dining area, as a divider from the hallway.

The elements are transparent, so they don’t affect issues of visual space or light penetration. One owner owns a factory and wanted a little of its strong, simple aesthetic to inform and

bring a sense of crisp modernity to the home’s serene traditional spaces.

The house has another less obvious modern inclusion. It has achieved the enviable merit of a Silver LEED project. The fact that the ratio of bedroom numbers to overall floorspace was relatively low – tipped by the upgrade of the basement – had made this harder to achieve.

“There was no room for solar panels, but everything else has been addressed,” says Massey. “Aspects included reusing existing building materials, minimizing construction waste, and specifying water-sense plumbing.

Natural ventilation was optimized and there is a new high-tech heat recovery air conditioning system. All paints and finishes are low VOC. Outdoors, efficient site irrigation and the choice of local plantings also contributed to the home’s eco-friendly rating.”

The reinvented home is warm and light-filled – the rear hall, repositioned kitchen and corner breakfast room open the house to the rear yard, as does the new covered porch. The spaces are simpler and more user-friendly and the new master suite includes a private deck looking out to landscaped views.

Above: To the rear, a covered porch was replaced with an open porch and pergolla, reached by from most rooms by a new rear hallway. This established a strong indoor-outdoor flow. The new master bedroom and deck can be seen on the level above.

*Story by Charles Moxham
 Photography by Eric Hausman*