



traditional homes

Fairy-tale ending

Restoring historically significant homes to their former splendor doesn't mean compromising modern lifestyles, as these projects show

Past is present

Behind the scenes, this historic Arts and Crafts-style house has been transformed with a lively, updated interior

Owners of properties in areas of historical significance are effectively custodians helping to preserve the nation's architectural heritage. Not surprisingly, such houses are subject to restrictions when it comes to remodeling, most of which are designed to ensure the original facade remains intact.

This house, in the historic Brattle Street area of Cambridge, MA, has undergone a substantial remodeling program, but the scale is not readily apparent from the exterior, says architect Pete Lackey of Charles R Meyer & Associates.

"The front has changed very little, but it has been refreshed with new paint and mortar that was closely matched to the original," he says. "The inside, however, has been completely transformed to make it much better suited to modern living."

Working with interior designer Courtney Taylor of Taylor Interior Design, the owners and S&H Construction, a company that has helped remodel many historic houses, Lackey used the kitchen as a starting point for the remodel.

"The existing kitchen was close to what would have been the servants' quarters, but it needed to be much more accessible," says the architect. "We brought it right into the center of the house, which then determined the position of the family living areas and the new stairwells. As a consequence, every space inside the house has been changed."

Moving the kitchen into an area that was formerly a wide hall and stairwell meant there was a need to address the problem of light. Introducing a series of windows to the back wall of the kitchen provided natural light and a view of the rear yard.

But the main source of light comes from a new double-height void above the casual dining area in the kitchen. This creates a bright airy space and allows light to filter down from large windows on the floor above.



Preceding pages: This house, in the historic Brattle Street area of Cambridge, MA, has been extensively remodeled, but the facade is original. Shingle siding is paired with colorful pudding stone at the base of the house.

Above and right: All the charm and character of house has been preserved and enhanced, including the steep pitched gables, decorative vergeboards and cornices, and leadlight windows.







Preceding pages: The front door opens to a vestibule, which leads to a large central foyer and a new staircase. Bold-colored walls in the new television room and formal dining room are contrasted by extra high-gloss white-painted millwork.

Above: With its buttermilk walls and new wood paneling, the family room has a calming ambiance. This balances the bright blue and turquoise shades in the adjoining kitchen and family dining area.

Three existing square windows in the kitchen were also doubled in size. Glazed with circular bottle glass, their translucency provides light and privacy from the street.

Lackey says the main stairwell was moved to the foyer immediately behind the front door and vestibule, creating a more gracious entry and improving the circulation. Wide openings between all the formal and informal living areas also ensure there is an easy flow through the house, which suits the relaxed lifestyle of the owners, who love to entertain.

"We amplified the sense of openness, so there is a much better visual connection, both across the house and between the different levels," says the architect.

A lively color palette also reflects the energy of the young household.

"The owners didn't want a stuffy, formal interior," says Taylor. "It needed to be more whimsical and maybe a little playful, but not over-designed or trendy. And we needed to ensure it wouldn't date. We didn't want to create too much of a departure from the historical architecture."

Bold, updated colors feature in many of the main rooms, where they are contrasted by extra high-gloss white-painted millwork. The central circulation areas are a light buttermilk shade.

"This neutral tone runs through the spine of the house, balancing the brighter shades, and providing a calming backdrop," says Taylor.

In keeping with the era of the house, new paneling was introduced to several rooms, both formal and informal. Both the paneling and the mouldings have a simple, transitional styling that fits with the informal lifestyle of the owners.

The remodeling project also provided new basement rooms, including media, exercise and games rooms, a mudroom, second television room, two guest suites, a new garage, heated outdoor pool and a geothermal heating system.



Left: Moving the kitchen to the center of the house ensures it is the heart of the home – in more ways than one. To introduce additional light, new windows were added to the rear wall, and a double-height void created. This allows light to filter down from windows on the floor above. The bridge leads to the master suite.

Above: Two new stairwells were created. This stair leads up to the attic rooms on the third floor.

Renovation architect: Pete Lackey, Charles R Myer & Partners (Cambridge, MA)
Interior designer: Courtney Taylor, Taylor Interior Design (Providence, RI)
Builder: S&H Construction
Kitchen manufacturer: Amherst Woodworking
Doors and windows: Little Harbor
Flooring: C&R Flooring
Geothermal heating: Uptack Heating & Plumbing
Kitchen cabinetry: Lacquered
Refrigeration: Sub-Zero
Dishwashers: Bosch; KitchenAid
Microwave oven: Wolf
Sink: Franke
Faucets: Rohl

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Top right and right: The basement was also extensively altered and several new rooms created, including a television room and games room. All the paneling and built-in furniture is new.

Facing page: Each of the five bedrooms is a complete suite. This guest suite on the second floor features soft green walls. Green accents in the bathroom include glass tile inserts in the tile flooring.

