

A comfortable mix of furnishings, including a pair of sofas from A. Rudin covered in Perennials fabric, surrounds a contemporary cocktail table by Harrison-Van Horn in the newly created family room. Opposite page: A wing with the new three-car garage and other functional spaces enhances the beauty of the original brick-and-stucco dwelling.





# original INTENT

Architecture enthusiasts assemble a seasoned design team to renovate a notable George Maher house on a lakeside bluff in Kenilworth to its former glory.

*By Tate Gunnerson  
Photography by Jorge Gera*

Kenilworth is well known for its bountiful collection of stunning homes by renowned local architect George Maher. Despite their historical significance, many are still vulnerable to demolition. Fortunately that was not the case with one of his most stunning creations—a brick-and-stucco dwelling on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. Appreciating the home's beauty, a North Shore couple bought it with plans for a major renovation.

"The bones and scale are fantastic," the wife says. "It sits up off the ground, so from almost every room, it feels like you're floating on the water."

After careful consideration, the couple assembled architect Gary Frank ([garyfrankarchitects.com](http://garyfrankarchitects.com)), interior designer Tom Stringer ([tomstringer.com](http://tomstringer.com)), and Rocco DeFilippis of Legacy Custom Homes ([legacych.com](http://legacych.com)) for the job. They asked the team to honor the architectural integrity while modernizing the interior and bringing in more natural daylight.



From top: The new addition resulted in a much larger family room and kitchen. The blue hues include a pair of chairs covered in Holland & Sherry fabric, counter stools from John Russell and a ceramic tile backsplash from Fine Line Tile. Stone flooring and white wall tile complement the blue wallcovering in the master bathroom.



"When I walked through this house, I knew exactly what to do," Frank says. Sketched over four days and honed throughout the project, his initial concept included a new three-car garage wing with a new mudroom, and a two-story addition to the back side with large windows and doors that open to a lakefront terrace.

During the 18-month project, DeFilippis and his crew completely gutted the interior and removed the front facade, replacing the bricks with new ones that were stained to match the original. "Basically, we took the house apart, documented all the pieces and parts, and then put it back together again," Frank says.

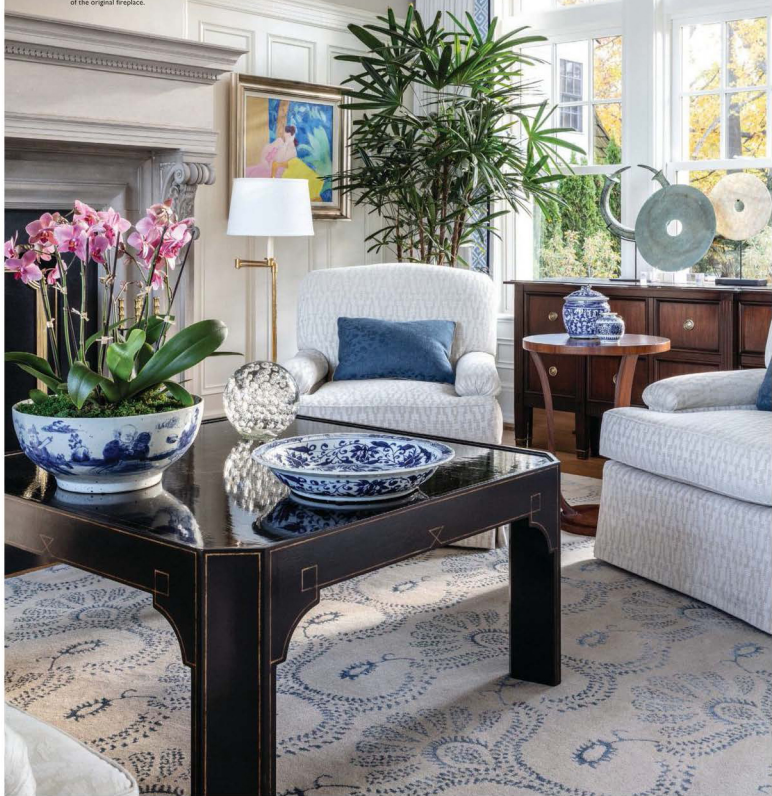
Indeed, the elegant foyer staircase remains in its longtime spot. And the moldings throughout have the same profile as Maher's original designs. The new windows are larger, but their patterns

likewise pay homage to the originals, which had been replaced years ago. "You would think this is a 1926 home," Frank says, pointing to the red tile roof.

"The cool thing about renovating old houses is that if you're patient and you don't impose yourself too heavily, they'll kind of tell you what to do," says Stringer, who attended many of the architecture meetings. "Design is about problem-solving, and renovating old houses takes that to a higher level."

Although much has been preserved, the updated interior has larger, brighter rooms that flow into one another. The expansive reception hall overlooking the lake opens to a spacious family room furnished with matching white sofas and a collection of comfy chairs in complementary blue hues. "These colors give the house a lightness of being, and

A large rug by NIBA Designs defines two distinct yet connected sitting areas in the formal living room, where a pair of plush skirted chairs create an elegant spot for conversation in front of the original fireplace.

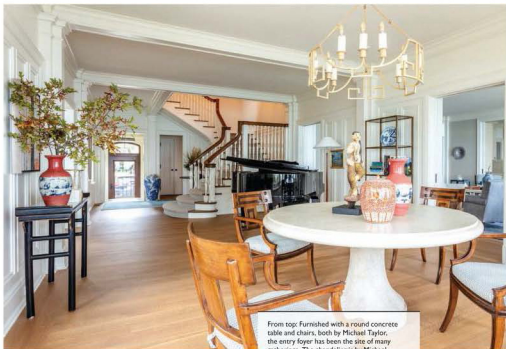




Inspired by a Michael Smith design, an embroidered grass-cloth wallcovering by Cressana is one of many patterns in the new dining room. The table and wrought-iron silver-gilded chandelier are from Dessin Fournir.



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From top: Furnished with a round concrete table and chairs, both by Michael Taylor, the entry foyer has been the site of many gatherings. The chandelier is by Michael Libery from Neumann Viweks; accented by a patterned wallcovering from Jim Thompson Fabrics, a quartzite backsplash by Tiled Tile & Marble embraces the small window over the vanity in a powder room underneath the staircase. The sconces are by Palmer Hargrave.

it works well summer or winter," Stringer says.

The soothing blue hues flow into the kitchen, where a pale blue ceramic backsplash and dark blue faux leather bar stools enliven the glazed cabinetry and quartz countertops. A small breakfast table takes advantage of the views. Large pocket doors allow the space to be closed off, providing the best of both worlds. "You can erase it from the landscape," Stringer says.

The formal living room is equally light and airy. A large white-and-blue patterned rug defines two distinct sitting areas in front of the limestone fireplace mantel, an original feature. Pillows, draperies and pottery add texture, pattern and green accents. "I hope the little details, when finally discovered, bring a sense of joy to the discoverer," Stringer says.

The dining room is equally detailed. Located in the former garage, the space no longer has lake views, but, Stringer reasoned, why waste those on a room that's most often used at night? Illuminated by a silver-gilded wrought-iron chandelier, the table is surrounded by leather chairs with patterned fabric seat backs that play off of the embroidered grass-cloth wallcovering. "There's this incredible craft to it," Stringer says. "It does a tremendous amount for an interior."

It's one of many wallcoverings throughout the interior. A bold blue grass-cloth one, for example, adds a jolt of color to a bathroom in

the new addition. And when coupled with a plush white carpet and upholstered headboard, a textural wallcovering creates an enveloping feeling in the master bedroom. "Wallcoverings lend this sense of quiet to a space," Stringer says. "They are cozy without being cute."

Neutral carpeting and walnut-paneled walls foster an equally cozy vibe in the clubby office, furnished with a tailored sofa punctuated by patterned pillows and a round table and chairs. Illuminated by brass library lights, a wall of bookshelves has a concealed doorway that leads either to the front door or down a flight of stairs to the lower level entertainment room. "It's been a big hit with all our 9-year-old guests," the husband says.

Unlike many people who relish sharing their renovation horror stories, the owners enjoyed the process, meeting with the team regularly to ensure that things stayed on track. "Watching them come up with ideas, vet them and solve problems was one of the most rewarding parts of the process," the wife says.

Living in their new abode is equally rewarding, functioning well for small family events or larger gatherings. "The light is beautiful, and the views are uplifting," the wife says. "We're happy that we were able to save the architecture and key interior features. I would say that it's even better than it was in its former glory!" ■

