

double take

GREAT DETAILS In the great room of the Futral's Druid Hills home, French doors, a high, coffered ceiling and glass-enclosed wet bar designed by architect John Klooster all contribute to the bright, airy feeling of the space.



natural spaces

In the redesign of one family's home, connecting with the outdoors was a top priority.

BY DEBRA MILLER

Virginia natives Michelle and Allen Futral share a mutual love of nature. So, when they bought their 1929 brick home in historic Druid Hills six years ago, it seemed perfect. Near Decatur and just a cruise down Ponce, it sits high on a hill overlooking parkland, with Fernbank Woods nestled behind the backyard. But as the years passed and the family grew, the Futrals found themselves spending more time crowded on their front stoop, their only access to outside. They had outgrown the interior, yet the yard was overgrown and under

utilized. "We absolutely loved the house," says Michelle. "But it felt really choppy and dark. We had enough bedrooms but not enough living space."

Like many old houses, the two-story, 2,500-square-foot home had small, walled-in rooms connected by a central hallway. There were four bedrooms, a formal living room and dining room, but a tiny kitchen and no family room. With two young children plus a gregarious English Labrador, the Futrals were feeling the squeeze. "We started looking around at other

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MASTERFUL DESIGN Architect John Klooster (shown here) tripled the size of the kitchen when he redesigned the house. Now it includes a mahogany island with black soapstone countertop, custom cabinets concealing the refrigerator and pantry, and a banquette-style breakfast nook—with faux leather, for durability.

“We wanted to make this all natural, so it didn’t feel like an addition.”—John Klooster

houses but nothing was what we wanted,” says Allen. “We just loved the area. We really didn’t want to move.”

The couple began working with Michelle’s brother-in-law, local architect John Klooster of Archetype Architecture, and after a year of fiddling with drawings and floorplans, the family moved out and Klooster went to work adding another 1,800 square feet.

“With many additions, you take the existing house and just add a chunk onto the back of it,” says Klooster. But, since the Futrals wanted more natural light and useable rooms, the architect had the challenge of adding on without

boxing in the existing space. “We wanted to make this all natural, so it didn’t feel like an addition.”

New Transitions

A neighborhood covenant insists that all cars park in the back of the house, which made the Futral’s back entrance the de facto “front” door. Before the renovation, the family entered through a crowded mudroom off the garage. Klooster transformed the mudroom into a wide, bright breezeway that connects the kitchen, carport, a new great room and outdoor courtyard. “There’s suddenly a real grand sense of entrance,” says

Klooster. While the rest of the house has oak floors, this breezeway is lined with Cherokee limestone, a surface that is echoed in the connecting courtyard.

Long a grassy patch hidden behind the walls of the kitchen and garage, the new courtyard “wasn’t really part of the house,” says Klooster. “It felt like it belonged to the neighbors.” Based on Klooster’s design, Atlanta landscape architect Jane Bath transformed the courtyard into an outdoor dining space that almost feels like a new room in the house. A brick archway now blocks the neighbor’s property, adding both privacy and security. >>



INDOOR-OUTDOOR The redesign of the front exterior (above) included replacing the stoop with a patio and sandblasting the white paint to expose the red brick beneath. Below: Interior designer Laura Walker sits with Michelle Futral in the courtyard adjacent to the kitchen.



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Sunlight from the courtyard pours through windows, flooding the home with light. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the kitchen. Formerly a gloomy galley with uninspired linoleum countertops, the kitchen is now Michelle's favorite room. "Now it's light and full of space," she says. "It's the center of life."

By knocking out a detached breakfast room and extending the kitchen walls, Klooster was able to enlarge it by more than triple the size. An island, with a custom-made Honduran mahogany base, increased the available counter space and a sunny nook lets the family eat and hang out together. Thick black soapstone replaced the linoleum countertops.

A Great Space

From the kitchen windows, you can also look out across the courtyard and beyond to the great room where, it's

"BEFORE"
MAIN LEVEL PLAN



"We wanted to keep the feeling of the original house while bringing in warmth,"
—Laura Walker



hard to believe, the garage once stood. Though a large room, the space feels cozy and comfortable—one that could host a black-tie soiree as easily as a child's birthday party.

Using weight-bearing beams of an added upstairs guestroom, Klooster designed a high, coffered ceiling with low beams that keep it open but intimate. Clerestory windows sit above lush moldings and divided windows mimic the ceiling pattern. An enormous Indiana limestone fireplace anchors the room. French doors open to the backyard and courtyard. "We really tried to stay true to the architecture, to make the great room seem like it's been here as long as the house," says Klooster. >>



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GUEST QUARTERS In the second floor guest bedroom, the 12-1/2-foot-tall cathedral ceiling gives a spacious feeling to the otherwise cozy room.

To help transform the space, the Futrals also brought on Atlanta interior designer Laura Walker. Working closely with them and Klooster, Walker created a color scheme that incorporates the yellow, beige and green color tones found in nature. "We wanted to keep the feeling of the original house while bringing in warmth," says Walker. "More than anything, we wanted it all to flow."

Though it's almost impossible to discern, some 20 different colors of paint were used to integrate the rooms and highlight the architectural details. In the upstairs guest room, where the ceiling reaches 12-1/2 feet, some of the window casements were painted black to make them pop out against the olive green wall. Materials like leather and vinyl bring in bold dashes of color, such

as the red leather chair in the great room, or the olive vinyl banquette in the kitchen.

The same is true for the exterior and the result is a seamless connection, where inside and outside merge, and even the most careful eye would have a hard time discerning old from new. On the exterior, white paint was sandblasted off to expose the original red brick. New Pennsylvania slate matches the original roof. At the front, where the Futrals used to crowd on the stoop, a new patio offers a big, breezy spot to sit and enjoy the woodsy view.

Now, a year after living in the transformed home, the Futrals are still delighted by the changes. "It almost feels like we're living in a new house," says Michelle, "but we never lost the character of our old one." ■ See Resources