

Artistic Collaboration





Thoughtful renovation ushers the masterwork of a 1920's-era architect into the future. | BY CAROLYN CROOKE



When Dean Kephart and Mark Tazik noticed the signs for a realtor's open house in front of a vintage Spanish Mediterranean near Cedar Lake, they decided to take a peek inside. Buying a home, of course, was the furthest thing from their minds. And they certainly weren't looking to become stewards of a long-gone architect's personal masterpiece.

But that's exactly what happened. Once inside, they were taken with the imaginative elegance of this one-of-a-kind property. From the barrel-vaulted ceilings to the fanciful wrought-iron work to the strangely beautiful and intricate spider web window in the dining room, the home spoke to them. Weeks later, it was theirs.

"It's beautiful and just a little bit quirky," Tazik says. "That's why we love this house." From what he and Dean have put together from records and neighborhood lore, this home was built in 1929 by a Twin Cities architect as his own residence, likely at the height of his career.

Of course other parts of the home's history, such as unfortunate remodeling projects by later owners, were all too obvious. So project by project over the past decade, the pair has restored and expanded the property, working closely with the team at TreHus Architects+Interior Designers+Builders.

In interviews with the homeowners and the TreHus team, one gets the sense of ideas flying back and forth, and of the group as artistic collaborators, devising ways to bring the house into the new century while preserving its structural integrity and artistic spirit. "When we're given the opportunity to work on a home like this, we see it as a sacred honor," notes TreHus President and Owner Dave Amundson.

"They were great about asking the important questions—are we planning to stay in the house, for example," Tazik adds. "Our goal has always been to build this for us, and you make different decisions compared to somebody who just wants to flip it. We've gone for quality and timelessness."

Their first major project involved creating a new garage behind the original one, which was tucked into the lower level of the home; this resulted in more lower level living space. The team built an outdoor living space above the new garage—a stunning improvement that garnered the 2005 Contractor of the Year (COTY) award for residential specialty and the 2005 Chrysalis Award for Best Project - Deck/Porch.

A few years later, Kephart and Tazik turned their attention to a side addition. "It was a junky," Tazik recalls. "Electric baseboard heating, parquet floors, 1970's bookcases and a picture window that didn't fit the home. We began to think about redoing it and adding a bedroom—building up and out." Again they worked with TreHus to plan and design. Soon the old addition was replaced by a new one with a living area, powder room and office on the main floor and a master bedroom above.

The work is virtually seamless in terms of scale as well as personality. "We took our cues from existing details, such as finishes on the wall, unique moldings. That's especially important if they're good details, and in this case, they were," says TreHus Design/Sales Manager Dave Carson. "Mark and Dean were heavily involved in the process, too, choosing styles and finishings, and doing a lot of homework."

inner beauty OPPOSITE PAGE: Careful remodeling has enlarged the home while preserving its arresting beauty. The doorway at the right of the upper balcony was once a flat wall; now it leads to a new master bedroom. TreHus fashioned the archway entrance to match design details elsewhere. ABOVE: Exquisite balance and often whimsical design elements characterize this 1929 home, which appears to have been built by a Twin Cities architect as his personal residence.



The upper balcony leads right into the master bedroom portion of the new addition, which meant TreHus had to create a new doorway where there once was only flat wall. “We were nervous because they were cutting into the barrel ceiling to create that shape, and if something went wrong, that’s the room,” Tazik recalls. “But it came off perfectly.”

Kephart adds that the addition blends seamlessly with the rest of the house. “Even professionals measuring for window treatments thought the space was original,” he says. “They commented on how square the windows are for such an old home.”

The kitchen project began in 2006. TreHus and the homeowners worked up a design that would transform the slim, dark, galley-like area into a bright, functional space. The team actually extended the room a few feet outward and added a window, which meant the roof and wall system had to be extended. You can’t tell from the outside; along with careful stucco work, the builder used clay roof tiles sourced from a salvage yard to get the same look as the originals.

Finally, just this past year, Kephart and Tazik had the basement done. Expanses of cheap paneling and gold-green rugs are no more; now you walk down into a spacious, serene atmosphere. There’s a gallery-like landing, a highly pleasant and functional laundry room and a posh TV room. The idea of what to do down there evolved, like so much of this project, over time.

“If we’d done it all at once, I’m not sure it would have ended up like this. We needed to live in the new spaces and think about what you want and need,” Tazik notes. “You have to have things you like, because you’re going to live with it.” **A**



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smarter spaces ABOVE: It’s hard to imagine this as a dark galley kitchen. This inspired remodel created space and satisfied the homeowners’ wish list while reinforcing the structural integrity of the entire home. RIGHT: The award-winning deck, complete with pergola and grilling area—perfect for a couple that loves to entertain.