

growing a home

If words like demolition and excavation don't repel your finer sensibilities, then you've probably never lived through a home addition or remodel. Even words like addition, remodel and renovation give some folks the chills. And rightly so—stripping a home of its appearance, tinkering with its internal organs and readjusting its skeletal system is not unlike... well, we won't go there.

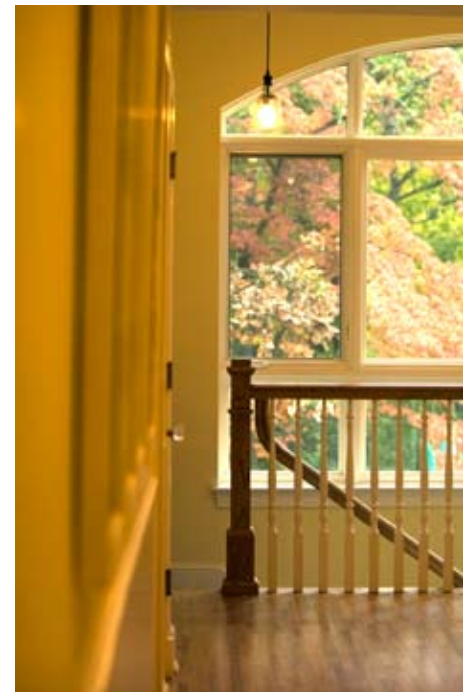
But for some, the remodeling process is an exciting opportunity for growth—the growth of a home and a family. At least that was Ward and Ashley Davenport's attitude as they turned their quaint 1920s North Chattanooga bungalow into a

spacious home that extends greater functionality while remaining true to its original charm.

Before the Davenports enlisted the help of Collier Construction and architect Louis Wamp, navigating their home from end to end was a sort of quandary. The home's layout made a gauntlet of getting from the front to the back. Moving from the living room to the laundry room, for instance, involved covert operations through one room into another and through yet another.

As with many older homes, the 1920s design lacked a layout that promoted "circulation"—that is, fluid movement within the home's quar-

Photos by David Brumgard



ters. While the beautiful kitchen, living room and dining room provided the perfect space for entertaining, the home presented many needs—like a hallway, a two-car garage and passage to the back lawn with its impressive deck.

Louis Wamp explains that the home was already sizeable, but it presented a “circulation dead-end and no access to the back.” He goes on to say that “the home was built during a time when most people didn’t own a car,” so the goal was to design an addition/remodel that included a garage and created fluid spaces that connected the front to the back while merging the old with the new.

The challenge for Wamp “was to connect spaces and to connect the back lawn, especially the back deck, to the rest of the house,” he explains. The addition certainly accomplishes the Davenport’s goal to integrate the back of the home into the existing

structure. As Ashley Davenport says, “We spend nearly every weekend on our back deck. We are really fortunate to have such a large back yard in this neighborhood.”

Ultimately, Wamp’s design helped grow a home that will acclimatize to a growing family as well as promote comfort, fluidity and privacy. “A key design element was to take out closet space and build a hallway,” explains Wamp. By creating a corridor, the addition was able to include a new master bedroom suite, new two car garage, an office, a laundry room, guest bathroom, and bedroom. The master suite incorporated a new master bathroom, walk in closet, and nursery. Off the master bedroom is a private balcony. And the new deck off the back of the home was built around a beautiful towering oak tree.

The home’s most prominent feature is its large picture windows, neatly arranged to provide full view of the Davenport’s back lawn. Mr. Wamp explains, “I wanted to create sight lines from inside the house to the outside. It had previously felt walled off when you were in the den or kitchen.” That all changed—now you can stand in the kitchen, gaze down the hallway through the set of twelve windows and catch a glimpse of the fall leaves decorating the Davenport’s back lawn. “The windows provide natural light, and it was important that the back stairwell not feel like a dungeon,” Wamp explains. The office, built out in the back of the home, features a view through the windows as well.

Photos by David Brumgard



If creating sight lines and new and fluid space was vital to Wamp's design, remaining true to the home's original charm was central to Collier Construction's approach. The new built-out hallway, for instance, shows no hint of a transition from the original structure to the addition. "Our goal was to make the addition look as seamless as possible—making base that matched the original. And we were careful to match the new door knobs with the old," explained

Bryan Youngblood, project superintendent for Collier Construction. Mrs. Davenport recounts that one passerby, a stonemason himself, commented on the sheer perfection of the stonework that blended imperceptibly from the existing home and into the addition.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was overcoming the restrictions of adding to the existing property. Finding space for a master suite without encroaching on the prop-

erty's setback line and placing a garage at the bottom of a descending driveway was not an easy task. For Wamp however, it is all about problem-solving. And not over compensating. "I am careful not to do something grandiose. Projects like the Davenports' are more difficult to solve than new projects without restrictions. But I enjoy the challenge of minimizing restrictions and solving the puzzle," he says.



families live in spaces

Ethan Collier

“And I think most of all we love working for people. We believe that our ultimate job is customer service, to build in such a way that our current customers and future generations will appreciate what we have done.”

I am quoting a statement I made in the March newsletter because this time of year reminds me that homes are about the people who live in them, share them, create memories in them, and grow in them. As a contractor, it's easy to get bogged down by “economic woes” or “sales figures” or “completion dates.” But at the end of the day, families live in spaces, and it is a great honor for me to build the space that often defines childhood memories or enhances many years of retirement.

In the green construction world, we call it “the built environment.” The term is useful because we are often influenced and shaped by our environment. Of course, it is our goal to make the environment inside the home a healthy one—the way we like the environment outside our home. And a healthy environment means more than just air quality or a tightly sealed building envelope. A healthy environment means for most people that the space they live in promotes their family's traditions, hobbies and interests.

For instance, limiting the trees cut down around a new home for a family who loves and values the outdoors. Like turning planned attic space into an additional guest suite for a couple who often have out-of-town family come stay with them. Like fashioning a get-away home around a view of the lake for an owner who grew up on the river. Like blending 1920s style craftsmanship with a chic new addition/remodel.

The Built Environment is more than a catch phrase. Families live, and do all the unique things that families do, in space that is built. It is important to me for that space to help bring families together.

Photo by David Brumgard

