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A total renovation transformed a century-old row house in Kalorama according to its owners' fresh vision of casual, modern living. The redesign by Washington architect Patrick Brian Jones expanded the footprint and flooded the interior with daylight as walls came down. Key elements, including the original staircase, were thoughtfully preserved and updated.



LABOR OF LOVE

An outmoded Kalorama row house gets a new lease on life

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When Robyn Segal and Marshall Rifkin moved into their 1912 Kalorama row house, they anticipated upheaval. For the just-married couple—a real estate entrepreneur and financier respectively—the opportunity for a major makeover was central to the property’s charm. Their 2018 purchase was all about the journey of turning someone else’s house into their own dream home. “We were looking to do a project,” says Segal, whose Instagrammable vision drove the redo from start to completion.

The couple called on DC architect

Patrick Brian Jones, who had worked with Segal’s family before. His plans detailed the transformation of the dark and formal, two-story brick manse with three bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths into a four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath home designed for relaxed living.

Renovation Architecture: Patrick Brian Jones, AIA, Patrick Brian Jones, PLLC, Washington, DC. Interior Design & Renovation Contracting: Robyn Segal, Peltrie Place, Washington, DC. Interior Design: Adam Bechtold, Adam Bechtold Interiors, Vienna, Virginia. Kitchen Design: Montgomery Kitchen and Bath, Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Clockwise from opposite, top left: Owners Robyn Segal (pictured) and her husband moved out during construction, which included a two-story rear addition. The breezy interior incorporates handcrafted elements such as ceramic shades above the dining table that Segal converted into a chandelier; the once-beamed dining room ceiling is now smooth. A new front vestibule borrowed inches from the living room. The original stair wall woodwork was painted in Sherwin-Williams’ Urbane Bronze. Before: the rear façade.



Adding a two-story, 16-foot-deep addition to the rear of the 2,500-square-foot dwelling made all the difference. “Originally, we were just going to renovate the existing covered porches,” Jones recalls. “But the clients’ program made it pretty tight; they were trying to squeeze a lot into the house.” A 52-foot-long backyard left room to replace the porches with a light-filled family room off the kitchen that opens to a new porch; a modern primary suite above it features a balcony and spiral staircase leading to a small roof deck.

The vintage dwelling in the Kalorama Triangle Historic District was elegant for its time, with nine-foot ceilings, a baronial crisscross of wood beams on the dining room ceiling and an ornate corner fireplace in the front parlor. The house is only 17-and-a-half feet wide, with minimal east and west exposures making for dark interiors—but the makeover, completed in 2021, produced a bright, airy and thoroughly updated home. Compartmentalized rooms gave way to an open main level, with the kitchen centered between living and dining spaces that flow together.

While extending the foundation, Jones lowered the cellar floor by 18 inches to prepare for a future in-law suite. The first level was cleared to the studs, and all glazing and mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems were replaced. A pantry was demolished and a powder room moved to open up the kitchen, designed by Montgomery Kitchen and Bath. New white oak flooring lightened and modernized the rooms. A straightforward brick fireplace wall with an integrated mantel



The formerly compartmentalized main floor (top, left) now opens to a clean-lined living area (above and top) with a Sixpenny sectional sofa that fits neatly into the front window alcove. The owners collaborated with Adam Bechtold Interiors on a brick fireplace finished in Lime Wash paint by Portola. The armchairs facing it were imported from India.



The greige-and-white kitchen (above) centers on a Wolf cooktop with a custom-finished hood; the well-appointed space accommodates double ovens, a Sub-Zero refrigerator and a small peninsula. The porcelain-slab backsplash and countertops are from Counter Culture. Segal styled the adjacent breakfast area (below, center) with a Noguchi pendant, Pierre Jeanneret-style chairs and a custom breakfast table of her own design. In the family room (below, right and left), a Maiden Home sofa faces built-ins by Capitol Closet Design.



DRAWING BOARD

Q+A with architect Patrick Brian Jones



HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC AND ITS AFTERMATH INFLUENCED WHAT CLIENTS WANT FROM THEIR HOMES?

People still want open-plan living, but designated workspaces are critical. I'm working on two new residences, and both sets of clients requested separate offices for each partner—on different floors. My new home has workspaces on different floors, too. While my design studio opens to our living spaces, I ordered sliding pocket doors to give me flexibility to close or open.

HOW DO YOU MANAGE WISH LISTS?

I ask clients to write three lists: "Must haves," "Would be nice" and "Ultimate dream." We often take aspects of each to come up with a master plan. Then we price it out.

WHAT IF THE BUDGET BECOMES A STICKING POINT?

If budget becomes an issue, clients have to decide what's most important. I always tell them the three main criteria are time, money and quality. With all the money in the world they could have it all, but usually they need to compromise.



The primary bedroom (above) overlooks the garden. The office (left) borrowed a little more than five feet from the former owners' bedroom, which is now a 10-by-12-foot guest room. The built-in double desk was crafted by Montgomery Kitchen and Bath.

now anchors the living area; the corner fireplace was discarded. Bordering the rear wall of the extension, French doors framed by sidelites and transoms accentuate light and views. Upstairs, an additional bathroom was installed between secondary bedrooms.

The plan retained the original front door, stair and interior window trim. A long-covered skylight over the stairwell was rediscovered and expanded. "Robyn really liked some aspects of the house," say Jones, pointing out the staircase. "Where we could preserve those, we did." Strategically placed built-ins and a mix of new and antique furnishings curated by Segal combine fresh style with utility; she imported a container-load of furnishings, textiles, rugs and curtains from India for use throughout the house.

During covid, the couple insisted on having an office without giving up a guest room. "That was hard to accommodate, given the width of the house," Jones explains, "but we were able to carve a little space out for the office in front." The ceiling in the office—formerly the owners' bedroom—was removed to

let in light from an attic dormer.

Segal notes that she and Rifkin took time to "learn the house" before reinventing it. As the daughter of a developer, she was no stranger to construction; in fact, the senior Segal joined his daughter as general contractor on this project, working with Jones. Adam Bechtold Interiors of Vienna, Virginia, collaborated on interior architectural features, layout and more. (Segal has since built on the experience, launching her real estate development firm, Peltrie Place, in 2021.)

The sparkling kitchen-cum-family room has quickly become the owners' preferred gathering spot—and the architect's favorite aspect of the project. "I like that it contains both the eat-in and sitting areas," Jones observes. "We were able to maximize storage, yet it's still open with a nice, light and airy feel. It is a practical space."

Segal concurs. "I love to cook," she says. "We knew we wanted the kitchen to be centered in the house, because we spend more time there. Ultimately, everything goes back to practicality and function." ■