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FORWARD THINKING

A HOME IN A HISTORIC CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD IS REIMAGINED WITH MODERN OPEN SPACES THAT ARE BOTH STYLISH AND MULTIFUNCTIONAL.

WRITTEN BY LINDA HAYES PHOTOGRAPHY BY WERNER STRAUBE

Maciej Lesniak's decision to renovate the Gold Coast row house he had called home for several years was both purposeful and practical. "The Gold Coast is an exclusive neighborhood of 100-plus-year-old homes that survived The Great Chicago Fire," he explains. "While I appreciate the history, with it came things that were a little antiquated and dysfunctional. This project was more about moving forward, and about being more contemporary and modern in terms of focus and orientation."

It was also very personal. A physician and researcher who often works and entertains at home, Lesniak was especially determined that the new interiors be multifunctional. "I was very much against creating what I call formal spaces that are pretty but never used," he says. "I wanted to be able to sit at the dining table with my laptop and still watch television in the kitchen, or hang out with friends and host a big dinner."

A simple enough concept, perhaps, until you consider the narrow dimensions of the home's four floors. "We had to work with the size instead of fight with it," says interior designer Tracy Hickman, whom Lesniak hired after seeing her work and falling in love with her style.

INTERIOR DESIGN Tracy Hickman, Hickman Design Associates
ARCHITECTURE Joseph Trojanowski, NCARB, AIA, Joseph Trojanowski Architect P.C.
HOME BUILDER Ed Vera, Formlinea, Inc.
BEDROOMS 4 | BATHROOMS 4 | SQUARE FEET 5,000



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“We eked out every inch we could without crowding it with too much furniture, and balanced open spaces with seating groups to make it interesting and functional at the same time.”

Additional design concepts adding to the illusion of space included playing up textures rather than pattern, creating visual interest by using different types of fabric in the same color family but with varying weights, and contrasting dark walnut floors with lighter flooring materials. All of this is evident in the home’s key spaces, such as the main-level living room, where pillows and artwork add pops of color to a neutral grouping of sofas and chairs clustered around a custom-designed French limestone fireplace by Atelier Jouvence. Set at the front of the house, this area is linked to the casual dining room and sleek adjacent kitchen via a monumental stained-wood portal that conceals a closet on one side and a powder room on the other.

Interior designer Tracy Hickman created a console in the living room of this Chicago row house with a small opening to mimic the squared-off arm of the adjacent sofa. The architectural piece is paired with artwork from Gruen Galleries by Gary Weidner.



To play up the length of the space, an elegant desk is tucked behind the living room sofa. The sculptural chair from Casamidy in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and the floor lamp by Christian Liaigre add dimension. Artwork over the fireplace is by Sherry Karver.



The multifunctional dining room features a Saarinen table from Knoll, set against a custom banquette by Hickman. A Rudin chairs covered in lime green Belgian linen by Élitis from Donghia create vibrancy. The Chainmail fixture featuring leather detailing is by Ochre in New York.

Right: The custom Florense kitchen keeps everything in its place. Pendants from Luminaire set above the quartz composite countertops deepen the contemporary aesthetic. *Below:* The media room features cozy furnishings and colorful artwork by Trine Bumiller.





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The portal was the brainstorm of architect Joseph Trojanowski, who worked alongside Ed Vera, the builder responsible for the project's construction. "Our goal was to maximize the natural light coming in through the front wall of the house," Trojanowski says. "We completely took off the façade and added 15 feet of wall-to-wall windows on the second and third floors. The aesthetic evokes the feel of a loft, with not much building and as much glass as possible." Vera adds, "Aside from the shared walls, the entire place was gutted out. We rebuilt it from the ground up with not a lot of masonry involved."

The loft aesthetic to which Trojanowski refers is especially evident in the master suite that occupies the entire third floor. "You really feel like you're in a tree house," says Hickman. "The windows go almost the

A private office provides ample work space with a leather-inset partners table fabricated by Olive Creek Furniture & Cabinets in Traverse City, Michigan; two-toned suede chairs and the light fixture are from David Sutherland.

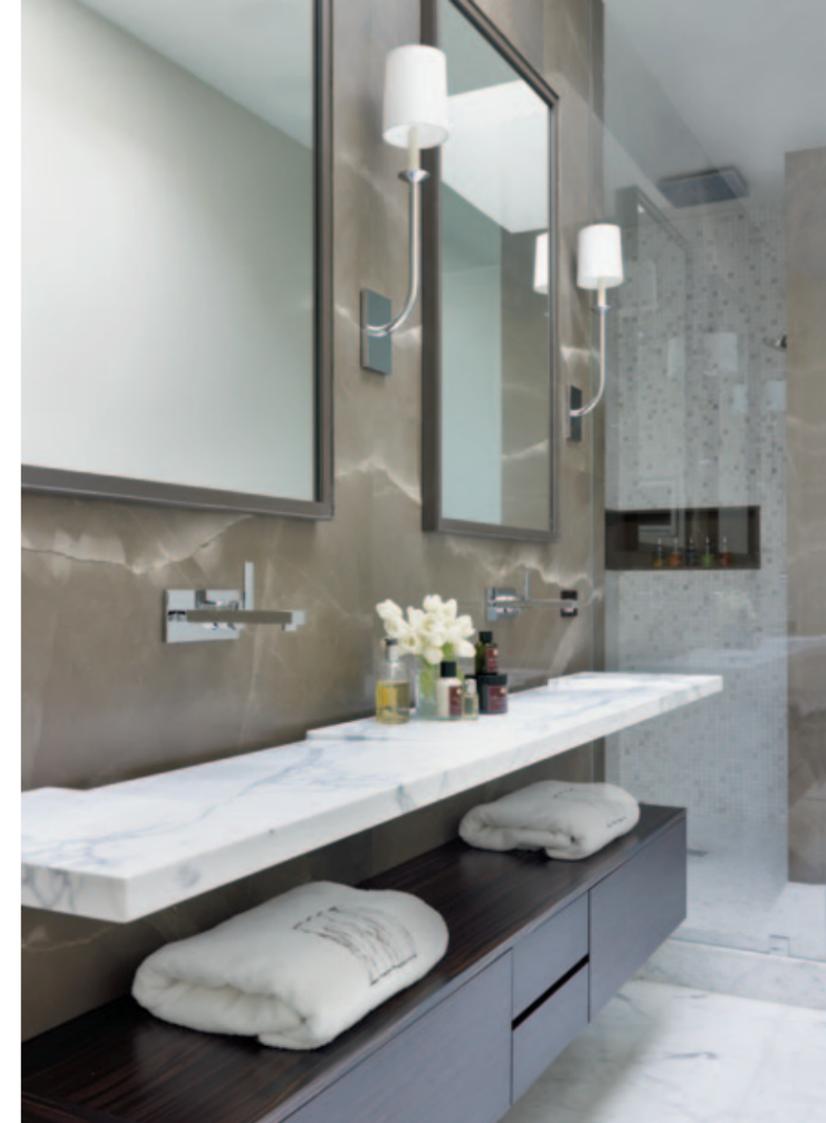


Light pours in from a reinforced skylight to brighten the family room. Original brick walls are the backdrop for a seating area featuring a Hickman-designed sectional fabricated by Anees Upholstery and a hair-on-hide rug from Stark.

"OUR GOAL WAS TO MAXIMIZE THE NATURAL LIGHT COMING IN THROUGH THE FRONT WALL OF THE HOUSE."



Lamps from Holly Hunt flank a guest room bed dressed in custom linens that Hickman had fabricated by Baird's Drapery Services. Right: Floating cabinetry and book-matched suede marble walls define the master bath. Custom mirrors by Armand Lee are paired with sconces by Palmer Hargrave from Dessin Fournir.



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whole width and height of the space, and in the winter, the skeleton of the trees lights up against views of the city skyline." Details such as a custom wool headboard fabricated by Anees Upholstery and built into a walnut cabinet system, and alpaca fabrics give the space what Hickman calls "a cozy, handsome vibe."

Additional renovation efforts included the rebuilding of a 12-by-20-foot glass skylight system to allow for additional illumination, the creation of a lower garden courtyard at the front of the house, and the design and construction of a tandem garage at the rear—all of which speak to Lesniak's original intentions. "At the end of the day, you create the space you want to live in," he says, "and I'm very happy with the space we have here. You're not going to find another single-family home in the Gold Coast like it." **L**