

TRIANGLE URBAN

HOME

CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN AND PERSONAL STYLE



**BEST OF
GUIDE**





renewing OLD WORLD charm

By Laura Jackson
Photos by Lissa Gotwals

Just five miles north of Pittsboro and 11 miles south of Chapel Hill, lies a captivating little town on the banks of the Haw River. It's a nostalgic place that comes with the popular description, "Once you get that Bynum mud between your toes, you'll always come back... and that's exactly what has kept it going since the 1800s."

It's the same place where a young couple embarked on a great adventure—bringing their 1874 classic home respectfully and beautifully into the 21st century. Because the original goals of the Protzmans' real estate search included finding acreage, privacy and a home with some age and character, the property in Bynum fit perfectly. Its gorgeous 150-year-old oak trees and easy walking distance to the Haw River only added to the allure.

Knowing from the start that preserving the spirit of its history, while adding the necessary modern updates presented challenges, they moved forward with determination. "Luckily, the craftsmen in Chatham County in the 1880s knew what they were doing, so the

bones of the home were in incredibly good condition," explains Alys Protzman, homeowner and interior designer. Some of the needed changes included opening up the home to the back of the property to allow for better views and a larger kitchen and family room, as well as adding a screened outdoors living room. As is usually the case with older homes, all of the bathrooms and utilities also needed a redo. "Basically, we wanted to hold on to all of the amazing charm and detailing, but essentially it was a total gut job," she adds.

Discovering BuildSense was the Protzmans next great find, who helped transform their dream into a reality. Alys describes her initial meeting with the team, "They were honest and straightforward, and











unafraid of the snake skin hanging from the rafters in the basement,” she laughs. “As an interior designer (Alys Design), it was a lot of fun working with another design team. I appreciated their expertise with quality trades people and integrating the best quality and efficient utilities and systems into our old 1880s fixer-upper.”

While BuildSense’s website displays more of their amazing contemporary work, their strong design history with historic preservation became evident from the start. “Their request to respect the charm of the home, yet live with the space and style of the 21st century was a perfect challenge,” explains Erik Van Mehlman, BuildSense Partner and Design Lead.

Taking cues from the home’s original form to determine the needed architectural changes translated to extruding the gable roof forms both out and up to provide wonderful wide open space in the kitchen, living and dining areas, as well as the new second floor master suite. Large expanses of glass doors and windows in the new addition visually and physically opened the home to the yard, pond, cottage, pool and garage. Working with Trent Lloyd Design on the landscaping completed the big picture of the property, and in the transition area between the home and yard is an expansive wrap-around porch creating a breathtaking extension of the indoors to the outside.

As you enter the renovation today, you are immediately greeted with



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open, airy and refreshing light-filled space throughout. “We thrive on providing quality space, volume, circulation and most importantly, daylight. You will see those as common elements among all our design work, whatever the style,” said Mehlman.

An appealing Southern warmth and hospitality seems to permeate each mesmerizing room of this home. Alys describes her interior design motivation, “For me it’s all about family, comfort, history and fun. With two kids under three, my style has to be bulletproof. I believe in surrounding yourself with the things you love and realizing there is no right and wrong answer with decorating. Experiment!”

Alys also believes in using accessories to add pops of whimsy and color, “I love supporting independent retailers, thrift stores and antique fairs more than buying new catalog items. Each item has a history and tells a story – and all of them are great conversation starters.”

Describing her favorite room is easy. “We LOVE our screen porch. Even though I’m pretty proud of the design and furnishings, the showstopper is really our view and nature’s little symphony going on outside. Our children heard their first owl out there the other evening,” she says. “It’s a pretty magical spot.” ❖