



# A Wrinkle in TIME

An Alexandria remodel calls on modern green-building techniques to channel a home's 1930s spirit

By Jennifer Sergent | Photography by Greg Hadley



As an expert and consultant on environmental sustainability, Kyle Tanger wanted to live the way he works. So when he and his wife, Lynn, were looking for a new house in Alexandria, Virginia, their goal was to buy something that would meet the best environmental standards. "We wanted it to be move-in ready," Lynn says.

Yet what they found was much different: a stately, 1930s-era brick home on a drive lined with similarly well-appointed homes. Curb appeal? Plenty. Energy-efficient? Not in the least. "It was in vintage, vintage con-

**RENOVATION ARCHITECTURE:** PATRICK CAMUS, Studio Camus, LLC, Alexandria, Virginia.

**CONTRACTOR:** HARRY BRASWELL, principal, GRETCHEN BROWN, project manager, Harry Braswell, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia. **INTERIOR DESIGN:** DAVID CHENAULT, d2 Decorium Design, Alexandria, Virginia.

dition," Lynn Tanger says. Yet, "we walked in this house, and it felt like home."

Thus, the Tangers embarked on a full-scale remodel and addition before they moved in at the end of 2011. Not only did they aim to bring the house in line with the residential requirements of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standard, they also wanted to expand it to meet the needs of their growing family and improve the sense of flow and open space inside.

The Tangers tapped Harry Braswell, Inc., because of the contractor's reputation for green remodeling. On Braswell's recommendation, they engaged Alexandria architect Patrick Camus to create the new design. And Lynn Tanger asked designer David Chenault of d2 Decorium Design (co-owner of Decorium furniture store in Alexandria) to assist with the interiors.



The renovation divided the home's original living room (above) cross-wise into a dining room with built-in cabinetry (opposite) and an expanded family room that shares space with the new kitchen (top).



The previously cramped kitchen (above) gave way to a much larger space (right and above, center), designed by Erin Hoopes of Virginia Kitchens. The countertops are White Princess quartzite; the backsplash is by Susan Jablon Mosaics; and the chandelier over the banquette is from West Elm. The eco-friendly upholstered furniture in the family room (top) is by Lee Industries through Decorium.

The 13-month renovation unfolded as a balancing act: Braswell and his team had to meet LEED requirements while also ensuring that every material, finish and fixture was aesthetically pleasing. The effort was such a success that it earned Braswell two Contractor of the Year awards from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, including a Grand award for green remodeling.

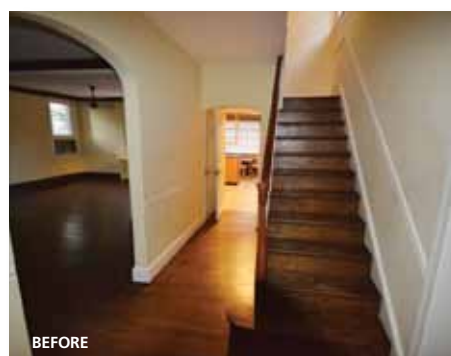
Because of their past experience, Braswell and his project manager, Gretchen Brown, assisted Camus and the other subcontractors in accruing all the points they needed to earn the LEED title—starting with dismantling almost everything in the house except for the brick exterior. “We had to touch every square inch of this house, because we had to remove every bit of plaster to get the insulation in,” Brown says. Most older homes with plaster walls have no insulation between the walls and exterior brick, causing air leakage. After

“We had to touch every square inch of this house.”  
—GRETCHEN BROWN





The stately entry foyer (far right) is a far cry from the dark original (right). It leads to the elegant dining room (opposite). The front façade of the house (above, left) got a facelift that included the replacement of a 70s-era family room with a garage (top). In the rear of the property, a small, unappealing addition (above, right) was replaced with a spacious one (above, center).



taking down the walls, Braswell built new ones about four inches into each room, then injected the spaces with highly efficient spray-foam insulation.

The old radiators and lighting came next, replaced with a modern HVAC system and LED lights. The aging roof is now Eco Slate, a recycled plastic that resembles the slate tiles used during the era when the house was built.

Braswell was able to salvage the original dark-stained wood flooring in the remodeled interiors; however, it turned out to be a rare American chestnut—which they didn't discover until the oak floor in the addition had already been installed. The challenge then was to match the two woods, whose grains are very different. Braswell's subcontractor mixed stains to balance the natural red of the oak with the natural gray of the chestnut, producing a shade that makes it difficult to see where one ends and the other begins.

Gone was the old kitchen, with its vintage metal St. Charles cabinetry and teak paneling. Erin Hoopes of Virginia Kitchens, a Braswell affiliate, designed the new space, which Camus united with the large family room in the rear addition. Answering Lynn Tanger's desire for symmetry and flow, Hoopes hid many appliances—even a cell phone charging station—behind uniform custom cabinetry.

There was one load-bearing beam that came down from the ceiling in the kitchen, so Hoopes installed faux beams over the entire rear space to make the look



uniform. And she left “the windows clean and open,” without draperies, allowing light to pour into the space.

One of the aesthetic drawbacks found throughout the old house, Camus says, was a general lack of natural light. To address that issue upstairs, Braswell built large glass transoms over all the bedroom and bathroom doors, so light from the windows would flow into the interior hallway. A master suite boasting plenty of windows was built over the family room and kitchen in back, while a guest room was constructed over the garage to accommodate frequent visits from relatives.

The Tangers are pleased with the renovation that meets both Kyle’s environmental goals and Lynn’s decorator instincts. The result is a home that marries 21st-century green technology with a style that evokes its 1930s roots.

Brown calls it the most beautiful job she’s ever worked on, crediting Lynn Tanger’s involvement. “Most clients,” she says, “don’t have that eye or that vision.” ❖

*Writer Jennifer Sergent is based in Arlington, Virginia. Greg Hadley is a Fairfax, Virginia, photographer.*



Lynn Tanger hired EcoNize to build chemical-free closet systems in the master bedroom (opposite, top). Low-flow faucets and showers were installed in every bathroom, including the master (opposite, bottom), to meet LEED requirements. The previous master bedroom has been converted into a playful children’s room (this page).