

Restoration

Bringing a Historic Home Into a New Century

BY DOUG HANNA

Owning and restoring a historic property can be rewarding, though at times an unpredictable experience. Many owners of historic properties rightly view themselves as custodians, entrusted with the task of preserving and maintaining architectural details through the years. However, they often find that the scope of restoration work can be difficult to gauge, and local agencies having jurisdiction can vary widely as far as what is expected and required of the owner.

When working in an historic district, the town's historical commission is your first stop. Learning the requirements, guidelines and restrictions on your project at the start is a necessity. Don't minimize the time and effort necessary. It can take weeks, months or even years to complete a

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project. The best philosophy is to think of historical officials as friends, not enemies, to projects. A town's historical commission has a wealth of knowledge – and may even offer suggestions or contacts to improve your project that you hadn't considered. Open communication will make it easier to bring a project to the finish line, and it may even help you earn a few concessions. Also, there is no harm in trying to do a little "horse-trading" – for example, "I'd love to restore the back porch in every detail, but my budget only allows for doing the front porch, which is visible from the street... can we compromise on the back porch?" Such bargaining may not work in every district, but you'll find out pretty quickly if it will fly or not. Still, remember there's a big difference between bargaining with colleagues and trying to cheat the requirements. Playing by the rules is key to maintaining good relationships with officials and helping your project sail through to the completion.

Even outside a historic district, there are certain steps you should take to maintain the integrity and accuracy of your home's details. Organization will go a long way here. Begin by documenting the architectural details with photographs and measured drawings if possible. It will take the guesswork out of replicating the style down the road. Make sure you catalogue, label and store architectural components to be re-installed. Much like a puzzle piece, you won't get the finished look you desire if things are put back together the wrong

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This Cambridge, Mass., home, built in the early 1800s, was moved to its current site in the early 20th century. The house had suffered a series of inferior additions built onto the back end, and had been partitioned inside and used as a rooming house. The additions were removed and replaced by a new, more historically accurate addition. Old components of the house were restored through close work with the Cambridge Historical Commission.

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Innovation

Visual Elements Create Unique Interiors

BY HOLLY ALDERMAN
AND KEVIN CURRIER

We're not on canvas anymore. New choices for interior design applications to make a place one-of-a-kind are evolving with advances in digital printing and art. New tools for art and photography are leading to exciting decor innovations, not only for special high-style residences but for all varieties of homes, from sea-coast and rural cottages to urban developments to renovated brick-mill buildings and everything in between. Even if one has no experience with digital art or digital tools, it is easy to imagine new possibilities for digitally inspired, custom interior design and accessories.

Architects, designers and artists can use

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digital tools and palettes that didn't exist five or 10 years ago for interior design projects, such as wall-coverings and window treatments, along with new art forms and brands growing from experiments, exhibitions and cutting-edge manufacturers.

Interest has been steadily growing in digitally printed wall coverings for residential and commercial murals. The variety of new substrates greatly expands the possibilities in material and creative applications, and the availability of textures, colors and the interplay between the two make it possible for creative designers to offer products never before possible in short runs. There is an abundance of textured patterns resembling plaster, adobe, grotto, sandstone, silk, linen, leather, snakeskin and more. Combined with the colors and patterns possible from their imaginations, today's designers will be able to surpass even products available in traditional, commercially printed wall covering. The companies bringing this material to market have done their homework. They have worked closely with the digital printers as well as the equipment and ink manufacturers to be able to offer materials that meet the limited-by-imagination-only needs of today's designers and specifiers.

The advantages of digital tools include customization and ease of including site-specific historical references. Becoming familiar with the digital frontier alters the concept and scale of what a designer or muralist can imagine and accomplish. An obvious advantage is the power inherent

in digital tools to expand production capacity beyond the labor-intensive nature of work by hand. Other advantages include bio-friendly inks, white inks and gold inks, surprising substrates such as plywood, metal, glass and even stone, as well as clear acetate for backlighting. Experiments in contemporary fine art digital reproduction bring fascinating results on fabrics such as sheer silk and translucent satin, tyvek or linen, for windows, room screens or other room fashions.

Another advantage is the opportunity to be outrageous or iconoclastic. When Classicism meets cyberspace, watch out for art comedy. Imagine digital intersections of eras of art history floating in time, Hellenic sculpture blending with fading Victorian etchings blending with high gloss garden furniture of porcelain enamel on steel at the digital dramatic art workshop. Perhaps the major aesthetic advantage of digital tools is their rich, mysterious freedom to create anything you ever dreamed of and more. The bottom-line advantage is reasonable affordability.

Beyond down-to-earth options for wall murals, digital tools challenge the historical definitions of established decorative arts.

There already is more demand for digital printing of garden scenery and historic photography on fabrics for shades, curtains and murals. The room-without-a-view calls for digital photography on translucent satin, or fabrics of varying degrees of transparency. Print a portrait or a

subtle mirage on sheer polyester to guard against blaring sunlight and enhance the view. Picture research becomes an important resource in digital decor.

The future aside, digital tools occasionally open our eyes to rediscovering antique art forms. Wallpaper reproductions may include historical prints. New/old wallpaper can have a charming digital effect. Its true condition may be charming, but can be retouched digitally without lifting a paintbrush or drop of water. Further digital adjustments from grisaille to sepia to ochre to Wedgewood blue are seconds, rather than months, away, and window shades to match take a few hours. To reprint a room of similar wallpaper from original wood blocks or to repaint the scenes in sepia would cost too much. Alternatively, one can transform a contemporary dining room, minimalist loft or narrow vestibule with grisaille scenes reproduced as giclee prints on wallpaper substrate. Or blend your own favorite photos into wallpaper designs. Like murals, site-specific, custom scenic wallpaper has become more practical, affordable and fun.

Digital tools are the palette of the present. To expand art's scope, digital tools are an exponential solution. As printer and ink technologies continue to evolve, the integration of digital and traditional art will only expand. Many artists who are training now are digital natives who have always had access to digital tools. It only makes sense that they will leverage those tools to stretch their creative abilities and develop new and innovative ways of expressing their art. ■

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Innovative Wall Coverings and
Window Treatments"

Strategies

Architects Must Plan Ahead for Retirement

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ing a successful exit and succession plan.

Knowing what you want to do with your company and why, and having a clear plan upon leaving your current position, are essential for successful exit planning.

Now is the time to start preparing to meet those challenges. You may decide to deal with them on your own or you may seek the support of a professional. Many issues need to be considered in order to successfully exit one's firm. An exit-planning advisor can work with you to help you come up with the best plans for your platinum years, and ensure that you do not suffer the pain of exit or retirement remorse.

There are six key steps an architect must complete in order to properly tap into their nest egg and ensure financial security during their platinum years.

The first step is to identify income and expenses. There typically are four main sources, which include Social Security, part-time work, personal savings and pensions. On the expense side, one needs to make a detailed list including such items as health care, taxes, utilities, food, transportation, entertainment, travel and gifts. In developing the proper list, you must first answer the question, what do you want to do with your nest egg? And secondly, how do you see yourself living your life? Are there places you want to see or is a second home in a warmer climate desired?

Goals related to leaving money for children, relatives and charities, coupled with developing a sufficient income stream need to be thought out and analyzed to see what can realistically be achieved.

As you identify your life plan in retirement, the second step will look at longevity and inflation. Living longer should be expected and your income

stream needs to be planned as such.

The third step is to look at the percentage of your assets you can withdraw from your savings to complement your other income sources and not outlive your assets.

The fourth step is the development of the right investment asset allocation. How conservative or aggressive you are with your allocation will be dependent on your withdrawal rate and risk tolerance. The process you will need to implement to

manage your allocation should be disciplined and constant.

Next, determining what investment vehicles and which types of accounts to withdraw from needs to be analyzed. Mutual funds, annuities, individual stocks and bonds are examples of vehicles that have unique traits as well as pros and cons. Whether to tap into taxable accounts or IRAs can be a challenging question and is dependent on your specific capital gain

and tax situation.

The final step will be to look at how you will take action. Will you go through these steps on your own or seek a professional? There is a lot of thought, planning and analysis that must be done. A financial advisor will be able to help you work through this process and has the resources to do the proper analysis. This can be a daunting task for many to do alone. ■

Restoration

Making Historic Homes Modern

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way. The best person to work on that puzzle is a qualified contractor. Someone who doesn't know what they're doing can easily damage the integrity of the components, and a piece of history will be lost. Paying a little more for personnel with a solid knowledge base is a smart investment.

Treasure From Trash

Here's another tip: Don't throw out architectural components just because they're rotted. By saving a sample, you can show contractors exactly what you're looking for in terms of authentic replacements. In some cases, a two-part, marine-type epoxy might allow you to repair trim rather than replace it entirely. Qualified contractors will know when that's appropriate. If a beautiful architectural detail is coated in lead paint, all is not lost either. You can try

stripping the piece or repainting with lead-encapsulating paint. A piece of trim can even have segments replaced with new wood. Just make sure that those replacement parts are made from wood that has a natural resistance to rot, so you're not repeating the whole process again a few years down the road. If it all needs to be replaced? You can still replicate old trim. Make sure that you save any custom-made cutting knives and extra components for future repairs.

Adding new-world convenience to that old-time charm is a necessity in today's competitive real estate market. But renovating a dusty historical gem is a labor of love. By taking the time to follow the rules, maintain the integrity of the project's historical details, and working with experienced contractors, you'll ensure that your property continues to add historical context to the fabric of the community for years to come. ■



When restoring a historic home like this one in Cambridge, Mass., it is essential to maintain the home's integrity and accuracy.