

# AT HOME IN HOMELAND

A house from the '30s gets a facelift for a young family

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER HUGHES

**U**PDATING A 1930s GEORGIAN STYLE RED BRICK HOUSE, while staying true to its architectural roots, can be a daunting prospect. But not so for Baltimore designer Elizabeth Lawson, who collaborated with Arma Gesch Builders on the redesign of this Homeland neighborhood house in North Baltimore.

“The house was very traditional in style and had a busy, colorful palette,”

recalls Lawson, whose clients are a young family. “I knew I wanted to achieve a more cohesive neutral palette—and cleaner lines—with the redesign. My clients also wanted the home to feel fresh and updated, while keeping the charm of the original home.”

The six-bedroom, 4,751-square-foot home had a classic center hall floor plan, with a paneled library and living room on either side of the front hall.

The kitchen and former dining room (now family room) were in the back. The first thing that was tackled was opening up the floor plan in the back of the home for easier everyday living.

“The kitchen was an extremely choppy, small space for such a big house. The homeowners’ top priority was opening up the kitchen and creating a larger eat-in area with plenty of seating,” Lawson says. “They also decided they didn’t want a formal dining room, as it was not something that was important to their lifestyle.”

The newly expanded kitchen has clean-lined, crisp-white, Shaker-style cabinetry and high-contrast black countertops in a hybrid soapstone granite. The island has casual bar stools for grabbing a quick bite.

“I fell in love with the cabinetry hardware in the kitchen and had to use it,” says Lawson of the brass hardware. “It was pricey and took forever to come, but it was well worth it.”

Adjacent to the island is a built-in bench that grounds the eat-in area and is combined with a rustic wood dining table and contemporary bentwood chairs in black.

While most of the walls, moldings and built-ins are painted white, serving to unify the design and showcase the home’s original features, all of the floors are stained in a darker espresso finish.



The family room’s gray sofa carries through into the Benjamin Moore “Chelsea Grey” paint used in the window trim. Leather chairs are by CB2.



The living room features a vintage Tabriz rug and a built-in window seat. The two leather chairs are from TRNK.



The sunroom features a CB2 coffee table atop an Annie Selke rug.



A Room & Board four-poster bed grounds the master bedroom, which features an intimate sitting area.

“We kept many of the architectural details in the house. For example, the living room contains these stunning antiqued mirrors above the fireplace that I worked into the design,” Lawson says.

Throughout, hardware and light fixtures have been refreshed, enhancing the contrast between the home’s classic lines and fresh appeal.

“For furnishings, we went room by room, looking at how the spaces would be used by our clients. It was important to use kid-friendly materials, like easy-to-laundry fabrics or wipeable leather, especially in the frequently used rooms,” she adds.



Cedar & Moss sconces add a touch of brass to the library, which is lacquered in Benjamin Moore's "Narragansett Green." Artwork was sourced at Minted.



Burke Decor counter stools pull up to the island in the new kitchen, featuring soapstone granite countertops. Chairs at the eat-in are from Design Within Reach.

The home's palette, with black and white at its foundation, plays with neutrals, like gray, tan and cream, which are interjected on occasion with pops of teal, citron and rose.

For example, in the family room, a boxy gray sofa, with striped rose cushions, pulls up to a bleached wood table, paired with tufted tan leather chairs. Ottomans with a high-contrast tribal pattern serve as floaters as needed.

"The color here largely comes from the artwork," says Lawson of a large abstract piece hanging nearby. "We chose modern and abstract pieces and hung them throughout the house."

However, the living room features a vintage Tabriz rug with a rose background, as well as grays and teals. The palette in this room is pulled from the carpet and travels through in a moodier way to the dark green/teal-lacquered library across the front hall; with its welcoming citron velvet sofa, the library is the most colorful room in the house.

"Our clients are really pretty casual people and we wanted to create several comfortable spaces within the home where they could entertain a few people at a time," Lawson says. □



The powder room wallpaper "Graffito" by Kelly Wearstler pops. The mirror is from Food52.