

Form Meets Function In The Heart of The City

A strong sense of community, award-winning schools, and the renowned Gaslight Village drew the homeowners to East Grand Rapids (EGR). A desire to remain in their neighborhood inspired the building of their new home on the exact location of their old home.

The clients interviewed and pulled together top talent to help make their dream home a reality – Dave Morren from Insignia Homes, Robert Sears from Sears Architects, and Rock Kauffman Interior Design.

Robert Sears shared, “The clients live in my neighborhood and are friends of mine. The couple has strong design sensibility and it was fantastic to work through the details with them.”

The clients were able to live in the old house before the new construction started. Rock Kauffman would suggest the same for anyone whether you’re building or renovating. “People should live in their home or experience a new piece of property for all four seasons before building or remodeling. It helps a client understand how they will actually move through their space.”

Once the design was agreed upon, Dave Morren set the wheels in motion with the demolition of the old home. “Demolition is where we hope there aren’t any surprises. When you’re building on an older site, you never know what you might find,” explains Morren, “The demo crew is amazing and we can be ready to move toward the build in as little as two days. The urban settings can be a bit challenging with space, but we’ve gotten really good at working in tight quarters.”

Sears explains the architectural design of the home as a Contemporary Farmhouse with an updated edge. “My team at Sears Architects worked diligently to make sure that this home fit the neighborhood. That it was in the right scale to fit in with the other homes on the street.”

“A lot of effort went into the exterior to come up with contemporary, but not over the top design”, shares Morren. Vertical cement board painted a deep dark grey is complemented by a horizontal, mahogany stained entryway. “When the clients asked what the exterior color would be I said ‘black or dark grey’. I sensed some reluctance, but promised that it was going to be fantastic – and it is,” adds Sears.

Landscaping can make or break the look of a home, so the client enlisted Tom Rooks of Rooks Landscaping to finish the exterior look. “I worked with the architect and interior designer to create a traditional yet contemporary landscape plan for this urban setting. We were working with a tight space and needed to create visual dimension. I choose the trees and plants that would be considered traditional, but that offer a nod to contemporary. My favorite tree is the Burr Oak we used on the side of the home – you just don’t see many of those. In the back yard we hung the

fencing horizontally. I like to think of fencing as a picture frame for landscaping. It captures the eyes and removes any distraction in the surroundings.”

Pure, Clean, and Comfortable Design

The interior of the home reflects the couple’s desire for a pure, clean, and comfortable design. “This is a family with kids and a dog. It had to work with their lifestyle. We would often meet on Friday afternoons to discuss the build. The clients challenged me, and I believe I am a better designer having worked with them,” Kauffman shares, “I was honored to earn their trust.” Sears offered a similar reflection, “This was a great client. They had very strong opinions on their project, voiced them, and then let the professionals exercise their personal strengths and do what we do best.”

The result of that collaboration, by the entire team, created a flow from the kitchen to living to dining using fluid lines. “It is hard to find an open floor plan in the more established EGR neighborhoods, states Morren, “In addition to an open floor plan, we could also incorporate nine-foot ceilings, upgrade the insulation, and add other elements that wouldn’t have been possible in an older home.”

Todd Wiley of Tru Kitchens was tasked with creating a kitchen with a light airy feel. To enhance the architectural flow from the kitchen to the living and dining areas, upper cabinets were eliminated. Cleverly designed drawer storage now holds the items that would normally be in upper cabinets. Another opportunity to create an open feel was found by separating the refrigerator and freezer. This created more usable counter space. The kitchen continues with surprises because hidden behind double doors is the homeowners work space. Easy access when its time to work, and just as easily closed off when the work is done.

The homeowner is especially proud of the banister leading to the upstairs. “This was created just for us. No one else has one of these. It is a work of art.” The second story offers a comfortable family area with a master suite and two bedrooms. The lower daylight basement area features a guest room, work out area and family rec room.

“Our team was extremely proud of this build. Our clients had a passion for design and function, and assembled a team to pull it off. We took the critical time to understand what client wanted, kept open lines of communication, and built an architecturally unique, beautiful home, “ shares Morren. “I love being able to help people’s dreams become a reality. I still get excited with every build we do and am passionate about every project.”

Rockwell EGR Home

Lisa Taylor

Cosmopolitan Home