



Aging in Place With Elegance & Charm

This recently remodeled home now includes two master suites while preserving the historic charm of the home.

When Mille McKenzie recently moved back to her Atlanta Brookwood Hill's childhood home, she did so to be the caregiver to her aging mother and father. Her parents had purchased this 1920s home in 1960 in a well-established, closed-in neighborhood lined with beautiful oak trees. At the time, her parents believed this three-bedroom, two- and one-half bathroom house would make the ideal home for their family of five.

More than 50 years later, with children living in North Georgia and Brunswick, the McKenzie's considered moving into a more accessible dwelling, but they really loved their home and familiar neighborhood. As Mille started planning to move back into her childhood home to help care for her parents, she knew living there as an adult would require some changes for everyone.

She wanted a separate in-law suite on the lower level with access to an elevator where she could assist her parents as needed, while keeping her dogs and cat out of the house—with yard access. Her parents wanted to add a main-level master suite with handicap accessible features, and a new deck to enjoy the gardens behind their home. Her father, who uses a walker and a wheel chair, has a harder time getting around and he loves sitting outside but it was difficult for him to get there.

Not new to the remodeling process, the McKenzie family has had their fair share of projects over the years. Mr.

McKenzie, a retired architect, had updated their now historic district home several times, adding another bedroom and bath, a sunroom and expanded the den. Mille has also remodeled another home she owns.

"Paces Construction had done several past projects for my parents, and hands down, they did the best work", Mille says. "I knew John Beach, a partner in Paces Construction, when growing up in Buckhead, saw what he had done here, and trusted them to do quality work. After comparing the remodeling projects done with other companies, Paces did by far the best work. John has top-notch workers, is pleasant to work with and just does a great job. We didn't even consider using another company for this addition."

ACCESSIBILITY IS KEY

Mille's father had a stroke and required an elevator, which goes to all three floors in their remodeled home. While the elevator serves the original master bedroom on the top floor, this space had narrower doorways and an original bathroom with tub, and it was difficult to update due to the layout. John at Paces Construction brought in architects Norris Broyles and Candace Carlson with Norris Broyles and Associates to help design the new addition, with plenty of input from Mille and her parents. John selected Norris and Candace because he had worked on both historic and accessibility projects with them



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and knew they would design an addition that would meet the varying needs of the parents, their daughter and the Atlanta historic commission.

TWO MASTER SUITES

Ultimately the plans called for adding a ground level in-law suite for Mille with a suitable bathroom, living room with kitchenette, laundry room, elevator access and sufficient storage space. Upstairs on the main level they created a brand new master bedroom and bath for her parents as well as a deck to overlook their beautifully landscaped backyard.

AGING IN PLACE SPECIALISTS

As a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS), John and Paces Construction work with older clients and make sure they design items like wider doorways to accommodate future wheelchair and walker access. “On this job we also installed a minimal curb shower with seating and handheld spray, multiple grab bars, extra light switches, higher toilets and vanity, level thresholds and split doors, etc.,” John said. “Part of working with older clients is also maintaining a very low contaminant, low-VOC environment to minimize health problems, and being proactive about hazardous conditions around the jobsite.”

ACCOMMODATING THE HOMEOWNER

“We worked with shift nursing staff and rest schedules, onsite meds and oxygen (critical around welding), maintained and integrated house wiring with an on-call medical alert system, elevator and lift beds, etc. Because the father was interested in

our progress, but it was too dangerous for him to come into the work areas, we set up a hi-definition camera connected to their home TV so he could watch our activity,” John said. “We also installed remote internet access to this video feed so their out-of-town son could stay abreast of the job progress.”

HEALTHY CREDENTIALS

Paces Construction is an EPA Healthy Air and RRP licensed contractor to handle lead and other site contaminants, in addition to their Aging (CAPS), Certified Green (CGP), and Earthcraft credentials. John earned his Masters of Science degree in Residential Building from Georgia Tech, and believes everyone benefits from Paces healthy building expertise, not just elderly, asthmatic and medically fragile clients. According to Mille this was important to them as well. “My mother was on oxygen during construction so having minimal to no dust was critical. John and his staff put up double wall barriers to keep the dust out, installed special filters and used a big industrial air cleaner. They did a great job,” she says.

HISTORIC AND ENERGY EFFICIENT

Paces Construction also updated the 90-plus, year-old home to be much more energy efficient with extra insulation and double-pane glass in doors and windows. "While going through the area's Historic District renovation approval process is considered a hassle by some, we like working with folks who respect their older neighborhoods and want to preserve the look and feel of these homes," John says. "Of course, we're still big believers in updating these houses to modern living and energy standards to meet today's lifestyles. When I presented the architect's plans for this addition to the Atlanta Urban Design (Historic) Commission, it was nice after the final city hall approval to have a commissioner thank me for helping preserve older Atlanta homes. He also asked me to express his gratitude to the homeowners for helping maintain the character of our great historic neighborhoods."

While working on the job John spotted a distressed original cast iron planting sink under the house. "As part of the remodel we had it refinished, built a period appropriate oak sink stand and used it in the updated basement area to help connect the new space with the old. "It is a very unique piece," Mille said.

HAPPY WITH THE RESULT

Overall, Mille couldn't be happier with the outcome of the project. "Paces Construction did a fantastic job. They were so pleasant to work with and whenever I had questions or concerns, they always were very prompt with answers and resolved any issues. We have recommended Paces to several friends and neighbors and I would never use another company for remodeling projects."

"We are thoroughly enjoying our 'new' old home. The deck and new rear windows on two levels are favorite places to relax and enjoy the beautiful scenery," she says. "Paces did a fabulous job!"



Basement sink before



Sources For This Article:

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