



House Proud

An ordinary house gets dressed up

By TERESA O'DEA HEIN

While a tree in the front yard can be a delightful counterpoint to a home, it can overshadow a property if it gets too big. That was the situation presented to Laurie and Steve Schelz, whose Riverside, Connecticut, home faces a 40-foot Dragon Claw willow on their front lawn. They are not allowed to remove the tree because it is over 100 years old and is the oldest and largest of its kind in the Northeast.

The Schelzes' home is situated in a prominent spot where one road meets a circle surrounding a landscaped pond. It was built in the 1960s, but many homes in the area are older and feature charming details.

After remodeling their interior, the Schelzes were ready to do something about its exterior: The homeowners turned to Haverson Architecture and Design, P.C., a firm in Greenwich, Connecticut, in search of ways to boost the curb appeal of their home and break up the horizontal look of the bland house. They also wanted to give it some character so it would blend in with the other homes in the neighborhood, many of which have front porches.

House of Five Gables

During the design process, architect Jay Haverson, AIA, says he and the

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TOP: Architect Jay Haverson added a wraparound porch and several gable sections to bring interest to the front of this home. ABOVE: Originally, the 1960s home was overwhelmed by the tree in its front yard.

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Schelzes realized that adding a porch alone would bring too much of a horizontal focus to the house. To balance that out, they settled on gables and dormers on the porch roof and the second-story roofline. Together, these create a more human scale for the home, says Haverson.

Not only do the new gables enhance the look of the exterior, but they also increase the interior volume of space. The section located behind the angled center gable, which was bumped out to be built over the new porch, created room in which to add a master bath, complete with a 12-foot ceiling.

That the house faced north presented another challenge; the homeowners worried that a porch might block what little light comes in from that direction. The gables in the porch raised the ceiling and allowed more light in the first-floor rooms.

"Typically, we'd put up a gable that would emphasize the center of the house," says Haverson, "but because of the tree's dominance, we generated a split between two gables, with a faceted center gable in between. A side entry onto the new porch also moves a visitor's viewpoint away from the tree and provides a better vista onto the pond."

In fact, the tree was a central element in the design. "Very rarely would we draw a tree in an elevation plan," Haverson notes, but he did on this job.

Since there were entry doors on both the front and side of the house, the homeowners and architect decided to wrap the new porch around both sides.

Even though only about 43 square feet was added to the interior, Laurie says it feels more spacious as a result of the increased daylight. And, she says, while the new porch area is not technically living space, the family now spends a lot of time there.



ABOVE: This working drawing shows an alternate design possibility offered to the clients in the early stages of planning.

Night and Day

Once the design was set, workers removed the drab asbestos siding that had previously covered the home's exterior. They replaced that with cedar shingles, painted in a natural sand tone. That color scheme is set off by trim and railings stained in an off-white. Offsetting those neutral tones is the porch's Douglas fir floor stained in sage green for a somewhat grassy, natural look underfoot. The roof was recovered with laminated fiberglass shingles in a popular color blend of brownish gray.

To make the home look as charming at night as it does during the daytime, the designers added two types of lighting: Recessed fixtures in the porch ceiling shower the area with light; two Craftsman-style hanging fixtures in the gables further enhance the architecture. The combined lighting plan is reflected nicely in the pond at night.

Developing the design approach for the project took about 90 days, followed by about four more months for the actual construction. Total cost of the project was about \$150,000.

"We took a house with practically no character," Haverson says, "and turned it into one of the most talked-about homes in the neighborhood." ■

All in the Details

Changing the facade of this house required a great deal of planning and research in order to create a design that would maintain the proportion and character of house to its surroundings. Architect Jay Haverson considered several styles of columns and porches during the design process.

- In keeping with the bungalow style he envisioned for this once-nondescript, 1960s suburban home, he recommended tapered columns. The tapered columns added both a substantial impact as well as a touch of whimsy.

- Traditional porch details include a bead board ceiling and latticework. The latticework under the porch features trapdoor sections that can be raised up and hooked open to permit access to storage areas for outdoor furniture.

- Speakers built into the walls facing the porches bring music to the family's outdoor living space.

- To give the front porch a little more presence than the side one, it measures 10 feet wide, while the side porch is nine feet wide.

- Building two gables into the roof of the front porch mimicked the look of the second-story roof and allowed more light to enter that area.—T.O.H.

ILLUSTRATION: HAVERSON ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN