

Creating Connections

WITH ADDITIONS AND UPDATES TO OPEN LIVING SPACES AND ENHANCE FLOW BETWEEN INDOORS AND OUTDOORS, WHILE PRESERVING MID-CENTURY ELEMENTS, THIS POINT BREEZE HOUSE MEETS THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF A FAMILY.

BY **CHARLENE CAMPBELL** | PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY **AUTUMN STANKAY**



The addition created a living room with a view of the backyard and a working fireplace for inside and out.



The addition, seen from the backyard.



When Zach and Elizabeth Lipsitz went house-hunting, they landed on the Point Breeze end of Beechwood Boulevard. The location is ideal, central to many of the family's activities. Zach, a Squirrel Hill native, works in Lawrenceville. Elizabeth, originally from El Salvador, is an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Their son, Jose Miguel, attends Winchester Thurston in Shadyside. Their two dogs, Sydney and Chencho, are well served by Mellon Park across the street.

The Lipsitz's house was a classic Pittsburgh red-brick box built in 1948, with just one owner before they bought the property in 2019. They wanted to put their mark on it, but took some time considering options. In 2023, they began working with Margittai Architects, a South Side firm, with the central question:



Recessed shelves beside the fireplace showcase art objects.

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How best to expand and update their living space, while honoring the house and blending in with the neighborhood?

Peter Margittai, the firm's principal, is a former board president of Preservation Pittsburgh and an advocate for reusing, remodeling, and updating older structures when feasible. While the previous owners had made additions and remodels over the decades, "what was exciting about this project is that it's a traditional Squirrel Hill home," he says. "The owners wanted a design that would reach its potential by being free of stylistic constraints. While respecting the house's original character, everyone's goal was beautiful light-filled spaces for entertaining and relaxing."

The formal living room and dining room were "disconnected and closed off, so to begin, we opened some walls to help with the circulation in the existing rooms," says Margittai. A primary goal with the first floor was to enhance flow between rooms and easy access to all rooms. As such, Margittai designed a passage from the dining room to the kitchen by way of a formerly closed-off butler's pantry.

The team also expanded a den in the back of the house to create a more family-centric living room. The space is casual enough for the son to have friends over for video games, yet easily pivots to accommodate the parents' cocktail parties. Floor-to-ceiling windows add spaciousness and brightness to the space, which Zach calls the sunroom. A double-sided fireplace opens outdoors to a patio.

The breakfast room, with the original wood-paneled storage cabinets and a painting by Baron Batch.



The Lipsitz house as seen from Beechwood Boulevard.



A view to the dining room.



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The outdoor dining area, under the pergola.

APPOINTMENTS THAT ALLOW A SEAMLESS TRANSITION TO THE OUTSIDE “ROOM” INCLUDE A PERGOLA ON THE SLATE TERRACE, ONE OF THE LEVELS OF THIS MULTITIERED BACKYARD.



A view of the addition.

SHADY AVE

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“We love the indoor and outdoor fireplace, and the living room to watch movies and spend family time,” Elizabeth says.

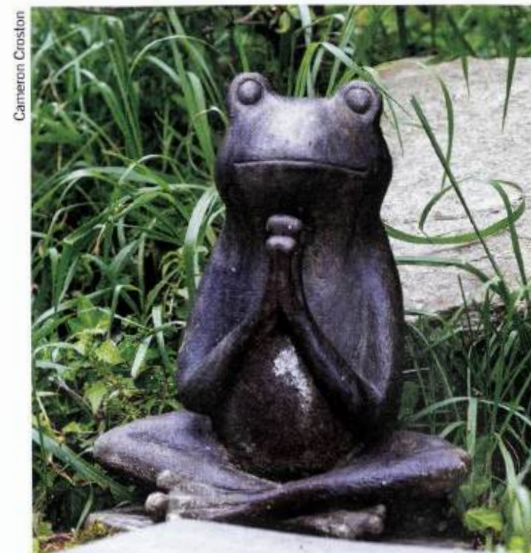
Margittai wanted to highlight the backyard, so it could be appreciated from both indoors and out. Appointments that allow a seamless transition to the outside “room” include a pergola on the slate terrace, one of the levels of this multitiered backyard.

The revamped backyard has “added a great place to host family and friends,” Zach says.

While the house received updates, there were many details to preserve: a striking wood-paneled fireplace in the dining room, wood-paneled storage cabinets in the kitchen, and a mid-century built-in buffet and shelving, which are adjacent to a new wet bar.

On the second floor, creating connection between indoors and out continued.

In the master suite, Margittai designed a sleek spa-style bathroom, which



A friendly frog in the backyard.

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feels nestled into the backyard. An enormous soaking tub, glass-encased shower, and quartz vanity and sink top look out onto the branches of towering hemlocks. Double sinks and built-in cabinets allow for ample storage.

As part of the addition, Margittai remodeled the second upstairs bath with a generous walk-in shower and vanity. An added guest room overlooks the backyard oasis.



The kitchen.



The addition's second floor created room for a soaking tub, glass-encased shower, and quartz vanity with a view on the backyard trees.

Many of the new furnishings came from PerLora, whose owners (see story on page 56) are longtime friends of Zach's mother, Kathy Lipsitz. Weisshouse in Shadyside and Hot Haute Hot in the Strip District also made significant contributions to the home's décor.

Along with the house's engaging blend of old and new, the family's art collection stands out. Pittsburgh artists are represented, with works by Tom Mosser and Baron Batch throughout the house. "We usually try to pick local artists," Elizabeth says.



A bevy of Buddhas.

Artistic trinkets and treasures from their travels are displayed on shelves and walls. Some are significant pieces while others are smaller mementos, but all create a travelogue, reminders of trips to Japan, Mexico, and beyond. "We pick up pieces that mean something to us or that represent something special from our travels," says Elizabeth.

The comfortable and stylish transition of the Lipsitz's home was a team effort between the family and the architect. "We knew the house was in a location we liked. We plan on being here awhile," Zach says, "so we decided to update it so we would enjoy it."

Old and new, and fit for a family. A beautiful Beechwood Boulevard story. SA