

Entertaining on Lake of the Isles

Located on the most coveted lakefront in Minneapolis, the homeowners frequently host fellow art patrons and large fundraising events. Unfortunately, numerous haphazard remodeling projects had taken their toll on this charming cottage. A previous expansion had relocated the kitchen to the back corner of the house creating a dark space, disconnected from living space and views. It was undersized for large-scale entertaining. The entire interior was cramped, insular, and had little connection to the lake view.

We were asked to restore the house's original aesthetic while enhancing its livability. Integrating spaces was essential; maximizing first floor entertaining space was mandatory as was improving access to outdoors. This became our program.

A narrow lot and practically nonexistent backyard was a challenge not only in expanding the first floor, but in adding a new garage. We started by moving the garage below-grade and built a terrace and pavilion on top. This greatly enhances the connection between indoor and outdoor living spaces. Putting the kitchen back in its original location made it the central hub it needed to be. Every inch is creatively used, and the relatively modest space is efficient and uncluttered. Details abound—from the calcite countertops, backsplash panels, and thoughtfully designed cabinetry which is skillfully integrated into the architecture of the rooms. The work remains deferential to the original aesthetic, yet enhances the character of the house.

The owners' desired program was delivered without exception. Site lines were carefully considered to provide views of the lake, even from the back of the house. The flow from one room to another is effortless—perfect for parties with many guests and for daily living. All rooms, while much more open to one another and the surrounding landscape, maintain the scale and individual sensibility so important in this historic house.