

## 2015 Blend Awards Project Description

Project Title:           The House to Ourselves  
Address:                 4001 York Avenue South, Minneapolis  
Completion Date:       Fall, 2013

This residential addition and remodeling is located in the charming Linden Hills neighborhood of SW Minneapolis. The original home was built in 1953 as a modest 1-1/2 story salt box with a detached garage. In 2012, an active couple with recently launched children were desiring to move back into the City. Linden Hills, with its close proximity to the lakes, seemed to fit their criteria to a tee. With their golden retriever by their side, they are now able to walk to many of their favorite shops and restaurants.

Their first and foremost design goal was to create more updated, useable space while maintaining the scale and charm of the original home and neighborhood. Our goal was to enhance what already existed by honoring the style and scale and not simply leveling the existing home. They wanted to live in a ‘Cottage in the City’.

The lot had plenty to offer including a magnificent silver maple tree which is now viewed from the new dining room and screened porch, providing shade for the outdoor areas. The home’s location on a corner lot also presented us with a responsibility to honor both street views. It was also their desire to keep and enhance the existing street presence on York Avenue. The existing front entry was fitted with a new, functional, low slung, covered porch, to honor the existing rooflines. This became a place to sit on rocking chairs and engage with their new neighbors. Being avid gardeners, they did not want to overbuild on the site. A generous garden and sitting area was designed along the north and east sides of the house which enhances the view from the dining room and new screened porch, a must in Minnesota.

The new addition created a much needed open and functional kitchen and entertaining space, which opens to the backyard and screened porch. The vaulted living room offers an unexpected spaciousness to what is seen on the outside as a 1-1/2 story roofline. Clerestory windows and dormers, which were cut into the roof for scale purposes, flood the interior of this room with sunlight and provide a charming exterior image to the east, with glowing windows in the evening. The existing second floor, which basically stayed the same, spatially, is now used as extra bedroom space and a craft room which overlooks the vaulted living room. The former living room was converted into a music room and office space, preserving the amount of windows necessary to complete the street elevation. The existing height of the house was increased by only 14 inches.

## The House to Ourselves, contd

Care was also taken with respect to the new, main floor program space on the south side of the house. This new addition houses a main floor master suite and rear mudroom entry. A single story roof was designed to house this area, as not to create an obtrusive, high wall for the adjacent neighbors. Windows were carefully chosen to honor the cottage style on all elevations. A repurposed leaded glass window, found by the owners, was installed as a transom in the dining room, providing visual interest from both the exterior and interior.

In an effort to keep the visual scale of the house appropriate, a continuous band board wraps the entire house, allowing a textural change between the original lap siding and new, board and batten siding on the second, half story. White, cedar corbels were also used at the front entry and upper roofs to bolster the cottage style and neighborhood fabric.

The clients also understood the spatial impact of an attached garage. They were very willing to stay with a detached garage, as long as it fit both of their vehicles and equipment. This move allowed the house to stand on its own as it always had, and allowed further fenestration and a deck to be developed on the east side. It also provided space for a beautiful flower garden to buffer the house from the garage and driveway. The new garage, which sits approximately where the former garage sat, incorporates all the exterior details of the house.

A new driveway was installed using permeable concrete, allowing surface water to virtually disappear during a rain while controlling runoff. It has become a fun showpiece when demonstrating its function with a bucket of water.

The couple now enjoys a home that provides them with all the space they need for themselves along with extra space for family and guests. They are now realizing all the benefits of living in the City with a new, updated home and are very proud of the modest impact they feel their home portrays. They can finally say they have 'The House to Ourselves'. We were very grateful and fortunate to be a part of this very special project and hope that it can inspire like remodeling projects in this neighborhood.