



The dining room features a playful mix of repurposed outdoor chairs, bright upholstery and exposed ceilings.

*Photography by
Virginia Hamrick*

From business to casual

While maintaining some of its original appeal, a downtown office becomes an eclectic family home By Erika Howsare

Finding a house in downtown Charlottesville isn't easy, but Kate Stephenson managed to do it when she spotted a commercial space for sale just north of the Downtown Mall. Like many onetime residences, the brick building had been serving for decades as offices. When she first walked in, Stephenson definitely noticed a "law-office" look—acoustic tile ceilings and a choppy layout—but she was also drawn to architectural details like arched doorways and a graceful central staircase.

The house, originally built in 1925, would require a total renovation to become a home for Stephenson and her three children. She asked designers Candace and Michael DeLoach, a sister-and-brother team, to help her envision a new life for the structure. Their services ranged from designing a new roof structure to the smallest details of the interiors.

"The architecture grabbed my attention from the beginning," says Candace, who liked the proportions of the windows and of the unaltered rooms. She and her brother redesigned the front façade of the house to make it feel less heavy and to allow more light inside. A decorative roofline with an "eyebrow" over the arched front door "made the house feel weighted," Candace says, so it came off. They swapped out a small second-story window for a decorative circular one salvaged from New England. And they raised the roof to convert cramped attic storage into a real third-floor living space.

"I knew we needed four bedrooms, which was challenging," says Stephenson. Adding the third floor allowed for not only the fourth bedroom but a TV room and an outdoor deck. A new staircase leading to the third floor mimics the existing one below and creates a vertical sightline from top to bottom of the house.

Stephenson and the designers clearly relished the process of finding furniture, lighting and artwork for the interiors here, much of it through the DeLoaches' company, DELOACH. They created a playful, eclectic environment that reflects Stephenson's self-described "casual" nature, with a few key colors and elements that unify the entire house.



An office upstairs—desks piled high with papers and supplies—transformed into a glam master bedroom, with a four-poster bed and mirrored end tables.

"I feel like I took a yearlong course on design," says Stephenson, who shopped along with the designers and approved every piece as it was bought, but didn't see the total package until the DeLoaches had completely installed the furnishings. "For three days she'd come by and try to peek in the windows," Candace laughs. On a Friday evening, Stephenson and her children entered their new home at last. "I was stunned," she says.

Weathered-look wooden planks cover the walls in most of the first floor plus the ceiling of the living room—a response to Stephenson's love of all things coastal, which also inspired the aqua-blue color that shows up on everything from walls to cabinet knobs to upholstery. Existing narrow-plank wooden floors got a new, light-gray finish reminiscent of driftwood, and exposed ceiling joists in some first-floor rooms add to the tally of natural materials.

"We knew we could do casual, but we wanted it to have a glam feeling as well," says Candace. Mirrored pieces, like the vintage folding screen in the living room and the four-poster bed in the master bedroom, as well as glass and Lucite pieces, add shimmer to the spaces. Deep jewel tones and sinuous lines (as with the curvy living room sofa and kidney-shaped cocktail table) make for a feminine, sensuous feel.

A strong mid-century vibe animates everything from Warhol prints to metal seashell



CONTINUED ON PAGE 33



Outside, Candace and Michael DeLoach removed the “eyebrow” over the arched front door, swapped out a small second-story window for a decorative circular one and raised the roof to convert cramped attic storage into a real third-floor living space. Inside, the designers retained many of the original architectural details—more arched doorways and exposed structural materials.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

chairs to a mirrored table salvaged from Miami’s Fontainebleau Hotel. “Mid-century was a period that wasn’t so serious,” says Candace, explaining why this project seemed to call for such elements. A recurring theme is Sputnik-style lighting, a space-age, geometrically playful reference.

Two new arched doorways into the kitchen make the first floor feel roomy and open. Though Stephenson had envisioned a white kitchen, the DeLoaches convinced her to go for gray cabinets (to blend with the weathered-look

walls) and a white Carrara countertop. Multicolored upholstery on the barstool seats echoes the colors of the dining chairs, which are repurposed outdoor chairs the team sourced from the Highpoint Antique and Design Center in North Carolina. “They’re very fun and wacky,” says Candace. “They made the whole place feel playful.”

As vintage items tend to do, many pieces have stories—the 1940s bubble sconces in the foyer were originally part of a Paris nightclub. Stephenson also contributed a number of items

from her family, like a 1920s inlaid elephant side table that came from her grandmother.

Though the house was gutted, the builders saved and reused as much trim and hardware as possible, preserving the house’s original character. In the third-floor bedroom, original brickwork and terracotta tile is left exposed, along with two small quarter-round windows. Details like these mix with brand-new features—like the ipe roof deck that affords a surprisingly big view over Charlottesville.

“I walked in and saw it could still be beautiful,” says Candace.

“The architecture grabbed my attention from the beginning.” CANDACE DELOACH