



# SPLENDOR in the PARK

Interior Design by Ron Wolz, Bittners  
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# Living in Harmony

**L**arge Cherokee Park homes have stately architecture that recalls the formal lifestyle of another, different time. Some people are still drawn to that.

But when this pair of California transplants bought their 90-year-old French-style home across the street from the park, they weren't looking for a Downton Abbey existence. They wanted it to be livable and comfortable, especially for their three preteen children. In fact, they said they returned to Louisville to raise their family here.

The appeal to the couple, apart from the pure beauty of the home, was its location: across the street from the park and walking distance to the children's schools.

The Olmsted-designed green space provides great views and gives the family a lot of recreational opportunities.

There's also the proximity of an urban lifestyle that they craved after living in suburban Orange County. "We just like to walk to Bardstown Road for dinner sometimes," the wife said.

The challenge for Ron Wolz, Bittners' Vice President, Residential Design, was to bring the needs of a casual, young family into a stately, look-but-don't-touch museum-like historical treasure.

It's always risky, in articles like this, to oversimplify the work designers do. But Wolz started the process by walking through the home with the couple and talking about how to make it "their home." First, he envisioned a softer color palette.









Of course, the stately architecture couldn't be ignored. It provided some of the inspiration. "There's a wonderful first impression when you walk into the front door," Wolz said. "Looking from the entry hall, the eye is drawn to a beautiful central staircase that goes up to a landing before splitting and going off and up in two directions. At the end of the view is a window seat on the landing, overlooking the rear garden."

It's an incredible place for curling up, listening to the harmonious sounds coming from the garden or reading a great book. The family's three pets - two cats and a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel - like to nestle in the rays of sunlight that stream through onto this special window seat.

"I wanted to take that grand 1920s architecture and soften and personalize it, to overlay the identity of the new owners and make it their own," Wolz said. "You'll see, throughout the house, a lot of soft neutrals - champagne, white, blue-gray, all timeless colors that are easy to live with."

The entryway, with a soft rectangular Oriental rug, sets the tone, creating a warm first impression for guests coming into the house. The rug helps modulate the formality of a beautiful dark wood central table underneath a simple and elegant crystal wedding cake chandelier.

The living room to the right has a wonderfully scaled fireplace with a gilded mirror over it that is original to the house. To tone down the feel of the 1920s, though, Wolz brought in another soft and youthful patterned rug and an assortment of comfortable furniture. "It's the place where family and guests will gather for the various holidays," he said, "and I wanted to make it a place for warm, happy memories."

At one end of the room, a grand piano in front of the windows is definitely not for decoration.

"I've played music my entire life," said the husband, a Louisville native, "and still do some studio recordings and live shows, and some writing, as well."

The children, too, have involved themselves in music. "My older son and my daughter both play violin. They're excellent musicians with good ears, and participate in the Louisville Youth Orchestra. And my brother's a drummer. So there's a lot of music in the house."

Across the entryway, Wolz repainted the bold red formal dining room a softer white, for today's more re-

laxed style of entertaining. The long dining room table with rounded edges has a classic style, but the upholstery fabrics on the chairs are stain-resistant, elegant but cleanable.

"Today's technology has evolved, there's a new generation of durable, easy-to-maintain textiles that are aesthetically beautiful and soft as linen," he said. As with much of the furniture fabrics in the house, it was chosen with children in mind.

A sunroom at the rear of the main floor is well-named, with two full walls of windows letting the outside pour into the house. It's a multi-use space, for violin practice or as a cozy TV nook. The neutral gray of the couch is broken up with colorful and patterned throw pillows and yellow and gray kid-friendly fabric on two slipper chairs. And there's another, slightly bolder, geometric patterned rug.

"This house is all about the surrounding greenery," Wolz said. "There are blinds on the windows for light control, but mostly we wanted to see the beautiful park outside."

Hewing to that theme of greenery, Wolz introduced a pair of fiddleleaf fig trees, "wonderful plants that add sophistication," he said.

The upstairs family room is also well-named. Wolz wanted it to be that homey nesting place. It starts with a light grasscloth wall covering and a sectional couch that provides cushy, intimate seating. A bunch of pillows are colorful and lively, and a blue contemporary chair with a chrome base offers a more modern surprise design element. "The blue just jumps in here," said Wolz, who layered several different shades of blue into the room.

In total, this is a 7,800-square-foot house and the family inhabits every bit of it, including a gracious limestone terrace overlooking the yard.

"We have fairly minimalist design sensibilities," the couple said. "We like functional space but not visual clutter, so Ron has provided open spaces that can be used, added to or moved around."

"If we want to flop down anywhere and play a board game with the kids, there's plenty of opportunity to do that."

"Some people try to decorate a home the way it used to be or ought to be," Wolz said. "My approach is to decorate it for the way the residents live. It's all right to pay homage to the past, just don't get trapped in it." 































