

Insiders Guide: 60 Ways to Rediscover Your Town

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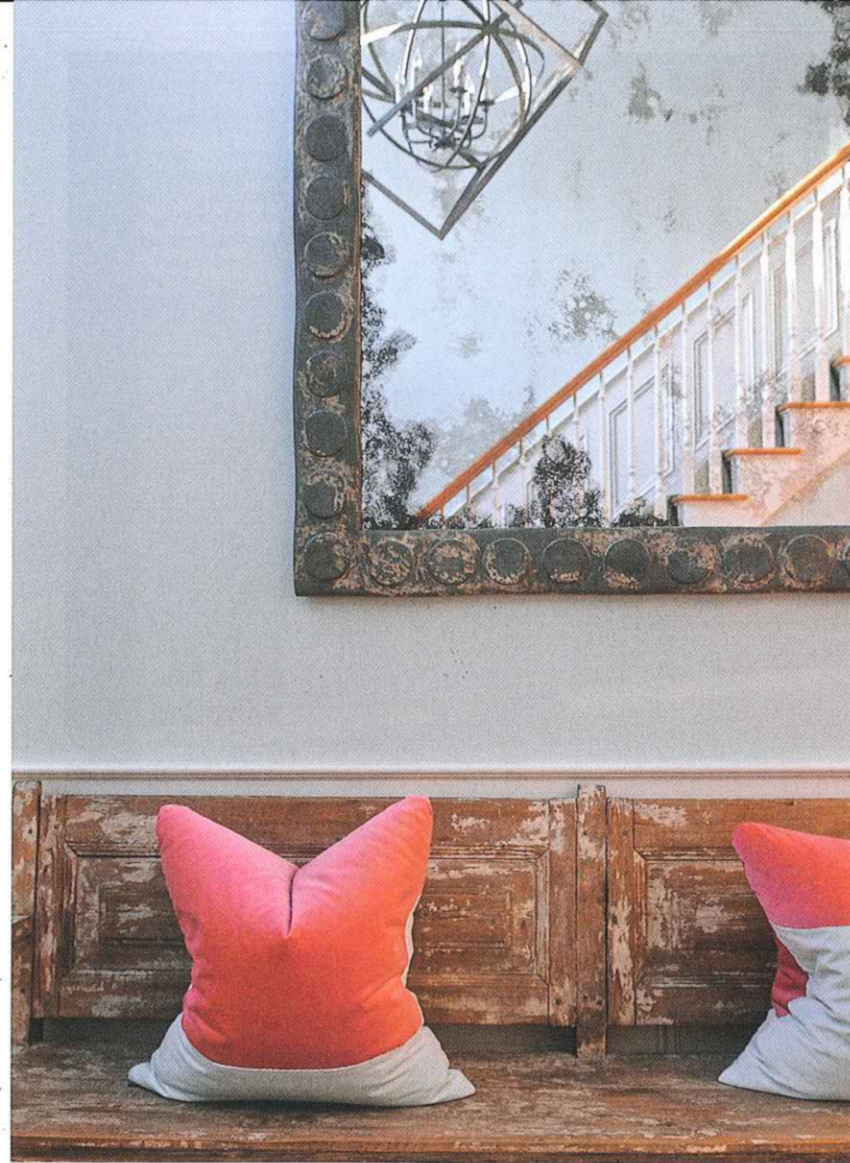
Perfect Fit

BY JUDY OSTROW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANE BEILES

Thoughtful design cleverly connects a family's home with its lovely surroundings



THIS PAGE: The deep wraparound porch provides space for large gatherings.
OPPOSITE PAGE: A pond on the property is an added benefit.



THIS PAGE: A window wall seamlessly connects a lounging space with the pool deck. OPPOSITE PAGE: Pendant fixtures punctuate the foyer and the kitchen; the redesigned exterior facade

The buyers were in a hurry. Needing to find a home for their family and nearly full-term with their third child, the wife was shown a place on a quiet road in New Canaan. The Silvermine River flowed through a pond at the back of the property and the lot's topography was fairly level, making most of it usable for outdoor play. Since the family loves swimming, canoeing and being outside, the location was appealing.

"I didn't like the house," the wife recalls. "It was built on spec and was pretty unremarkable. But the site was good, and I figured we could make it better once we lived in it for a while." So the family moved in, a few years passed and the couple began to think about how to improve the house and make it work for their active lifestyle. Originally from the South and fond of outdoor entertaining, the wife wanted to make better use the lovely setting and to connect the house with its surroundings. She called in architect James Schettino, who designed a deep, wraparound porch and enlarged openings from the public rooms. A new shape and function emerged. "My children used to call it the pointy house," says the wife, referring to the gables and dormers. But as builder Paul Tully constructed



Schettino's design, the porch put all the angles in visual balance within the home's new and larger footprint. The possibilities of a formerly generic design began to reveal themselves.

Then came the task of outfitting the outdoor spaces with furnishings and fixtures that would enhance it. The wife had become friends with many of her neighbors, including designer Tori Legge, so her next step was a logical one. "I really loved what Tori did with her own house," recalls the homeowner. "So, I asked her for some help with ours." Legge, who grew up in California and has an understanding of spaces that flow easily from interior to exterior, went to work. First, she furnished the porch with all the amenities and creature comforts that serve its function in the warmer months as a place to relax and entertain. A full outdoor kitchen with a dining area, a wooden porch swing, a fireplace and two-staircase access to the pool are all accommodated by the vast covered space, creating a flowing transition from the inside to the outside.

The husband, from a family of world-class swimmers that includes an Olympian, wanted a pool where he could do competition-length laps, and so an extra-long pool was installed, along with a

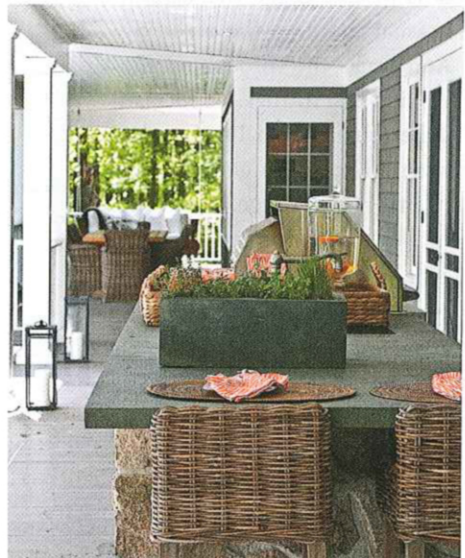
changing and relaxation area in the home's walk-out lower level. The most critical design element—access from the lower level out to the patio—was accomplished with a wall of French doors that completely disappears when the pool is in use. Legge was careful to spend the owners' budget in this casual space on the enduring elements—the disappearing doors, Ann Sacks tile throughout the changing room, and a high-functioning sink and fittings. To furnish the seating area, she chose white leather chairs from IKEA and a coffee table from Restoration Hardware. "This space gets a lot of use from adults and children in swimsuits," notes Legge. "It didn't make sense to buy expensive furniture. We chose pieces for their good looks and good function."

With the outside shaping up, Legge and her client turned to the interior spaces.

"We live in the kitchen," notes the homeowner, who loves to cook and is constantly offering hospitality to friends. "We wanted it to look great and really work for us."

New, larger windows that open the room to the backyard, a comfortable and casual dining area, and a bright work area with the

THIS PAGE: Plentiful furnishings and multiple seating areas make the landscape highly functional for an active family. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Oversized windows and French doors flood the interior spaces with light.



natural light her clients love transformed what was once a garden-variety space into an attractive hub for the house. Its tranquil beauty belies its basic utility. Legge didn't gut the original kitchen, but she gave it a major upgrade. Cabinet facings were painted in a high-gloss white finish that looks and wears like lacquer. New hardware was added. Marble tile and elegant pendant fixtures provided the modern good looks that met with everyone's approval.

Other public rooms that got a makeover include the living room and the very vertical foyer. To bring its height into proportion, Legge installed a dramatic, four-foot diameter bronze pendant made by Solaria in the front entry. Large-scale pieces—a bench, a metallic framed mirror, a tall urn—decorate this space in perfect proportion. The living room, which boasts more bold scale, possesses the same relaxed feel as the rest of the house, with windows facing expansive views of the property and pond.

Because the family is always on the go, Legge has taken a room-by-room approach to renovation, allowing the home's potential to unfold gradually, like a large, lovely bloom. Next on the agenda is a reworking of the dining room—with larger windows and more light, of course. The mudroom will need a makeover, too, as all three children are involved in a variety of sports. And so, the project continues.

The designer enjoys her role in the evolution of this happy and comfortable home. Says Legge, "It's fun to be part of the process of making the house fit the family."

RESOURCES

Designer Tori Legge, Stirling Mills Design, 203-807-1709

Architect James Schettino, schettinoarchitects.com

Builder Paul Tully, Imian Partners, imianpartners.com

Landscape designer Diane Bilgore, DAB Design, dianebilgore.com

