

A Tudor Transformed

By Susan Todebush

Photos by Justin Maconochie

Looking for a new project, designer Kevin Serba, *Serba Interiors*, took a break from paperwork to see a newly listed home in Birmingham's Poppleton Park neighborhood. The house, a 1936 Tudor, had great bones, but lots of room for improvement.

Recognizing the home's potential, Serba wasted no time putting in an offer during his mile-long drive back to his studio.

"It was one of the quickest decisions I've made," Serba says with a grin. "It just felt like a good house, and I knew I could make some improvements that would really bring it back to what it should be."

After moving in, Serba set up camp in a first-floor bedroom, where he would live during the seven-month renovation. He doesn't usually advise living at home when extensive work is being done. It takes incredible patience, but his daily presence on site kept the project moving forward with little down time.



A circa-1600s beam found in England adds character and authenticity to the family room addition. A paneled wall helps the television recede from view.



Previous owners had added a family room, first-floor bedroom suite, and mudroom to the home's original footprint. While the exterior was executed well, the interior was done without the original home in mind. The plain, boxy rooms offered none of the charm found in the front of the house.

Serba had metal mullions fabricated for the family room's French doors and windows to mirror those in the living room. He located a rustic wood beam from the 17th century and ran it the length of the family room, adding character and a sense of history. A dark paneled wall next to the fireplace allows the television to fade from view. Walls were treated with a faux limestone paint



Some of the home's original charm had been stripped away. Serba restored the plaster moldings and replaced the windows, painting the mullions to echo the metal ones elsewhere in the house. French doors and oversized windows keep the living room light and bright.

Seating: *Henredon Interior Design Showroom, Suite 122*

Serba chose an elegant grass cloth wallpaper and new lighting for the dining room.
Wallpaper and window fabric: *Rozmallin, Suite 60*
Bench: *Baker Furniture, Suite 60*

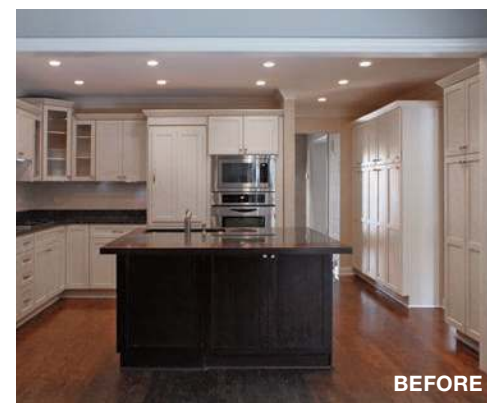




technique that echoes the new stone fireplace surround, completing the transformation.

In the kitchen, Serba retained the room's original size but made big changes to the layout. The wall along the dining room was made much thicker, allowing Serba to create built-in cabinets with glass upper display cabinets and serving area to one side of the doorway, and refrigerated drawers and a pantry on the other. The new vaulted passage to the dining room was outfitted with a custom trim pattern similar to the paneled family room wall.

An avid cook, Serba relocated and enlarged the cooktop, and installed a more powerful recessed exhaust system.

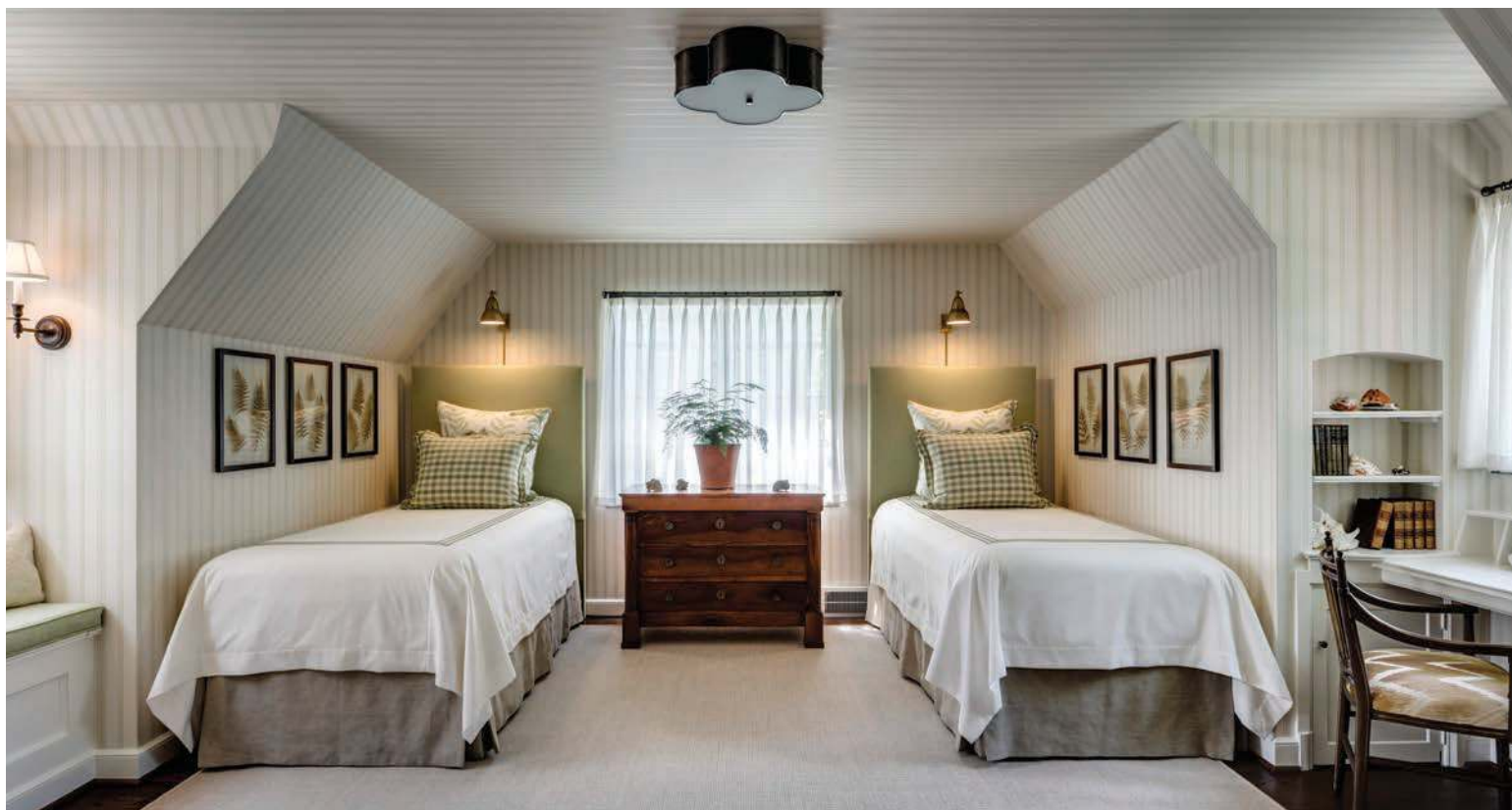


With his love of cooking in mind, Serba made big changes in the kitchen layout while keeping its modest 10' by 15' footprint.

Faucets: *Ann Sacks, Suite 91*
Tile: *Virginia Tile, Suite 100*

Opposite Page: A small office and hall bath were combined to create a bright new Jack-and-Jill bath for upstairs guests.





Custom-colored ceramic wall tiles from Virginia Tile are both beautiful and easy to keep clean. A recessed bookshelf keeps recipes within reach, and the pot filler faucet is an added convenience Serba designed for the space. He chose quartz countertops – they don’t scratch or stain, but have all the character of natural stone.

Stainless steel cabinets share a wall with the built-in ovens and refrigerator, adding a sleek, modern touch. Serba chose a steam oven over the typical microwave, and says he finds himself using it more often than he thought he would. “It may take a few minutes longer than a microwave, but the texture of the food is so much better, and the steam really helps preserve the nutrients,” he says.

Serba found some elements original to the house in the upstairs front bedrooms. He copied the distinctive, layered raised pattern of the bedroom doors on new solid oak doors he made for the rest of the house.

An office and small bath at the top of the stairway were made into one larger Jack-and-Jill bath. He relocated one existing window and paneled the walls and ceiling in wood finished in glossy white. Vintage-inspired lighting and sinks are paired with a free-standing tub and glass shower for a room that combines character with modern functionality.

The home, now completed, is comfortable and gracious and feels like the best version of its time and era. While design elements retain the home’s original character and charm, rooms are light-filled and airy – not always true of the Tudor style.

Serba is already on to his next project, a 57-foot Sea Ray. After gutting the interior and adding mahogany paneling and teak and holly floors, he’s working on furnishings and art.

To see more before-and-after photos of this home, visit michigandesign.com/blog.



Top: New lighting and a crisp striped wallpaper welcome guests in an upstairs bedroom.

Headboard fabric: *Kravet/Lee Jofa/Brunschwig & Fils, Suite 105*

Wallcovering and fern fabric: *Rozmallin, Suite 60*

Bottom: An upstairs bedroom uses navy and white for a classic combination that feels timeless.

Ralph Lauren wallcovering and curtain fabric: *Kravet/Lee Jofa/Brunschwig & Fils, Suite 105*

Opposite Page: Kevin Serba’s 1936 Birmingham Tudor underwent a total renovation in just seven months.



Considering a major renovation project? Designer Kevin Serba has done dozens of them for his clients and in his own homes. He shares his best advice for surviving what will likely be a months-long process:

CHOOSE WISELY. Does the home have good “bones” and floor plan? Walls can be removed, but it’s very difficult to change overall proportions of major rooms in a home.

LOOK FOR GOOD STRUCTURE. If you are starting out with a well-built home, the investment in renovating it is better justified. Lots of budget dollars can be eaten up fixing construction problems.

CONSIDER LIFESTYLE. It’s important to consider how each room will be used. Will the mudroom be the main entry point for the family? If so, choose easy-to-clean flooring and create enough open space for people to easily get inside. Enjoy reading? Plan for comfortable seating and great lighting.

THE CHARM FACTOR IS IMPORTANT. It is very difficult (and expensive) to give character to something that lacks it.

LIVE ELSEWHERE IF POSSIBLE. Renovation is dirty and disruptive, and tradespeople need access as their schedules permit. Limiting their access will cost extra time and money.

SPEAKING OF TRADESPEOPLE...It’s worth it to wait for the best people. Don’t make do with lesser-quality work just because someone is available a week sooner than your first choice.

BE DECISIVE; TIME IS MONEY. Make important decisions ahead of time, and if something unexpected crops up, be prepared to choose a direction and go with it. If that is difficult for you, consider hiring an experienced designer who will help you make the best choices for your home.



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