

New York Living

RE-INVENTING HOME

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PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICK HALES

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While maintaining the facade of the peaceful suburb, Laura Heim has brought movement and light throughout the house.



262 Located at the end of the row, the terrace house enjoys windows on three sides, which bring in more light than in other row houses. It also benefits from three terraces at different levels and orientations engaging the street and interior landscape. Given this unique location, accentuating the relationship between the interior and the historic garden plan became an essential aspect of the design process. The opportunity to transform this two family house into a one family home provided an incredible challenge of totally reimagining the spatial sequences.

The entry porch creates a charming transitional space from the street to house. The design incorporated a custom bench around two sides for seating and shoe storage. The original opening to the second floor apartment has been closed in to create a coat hook area with light above providing visual access from the stairway to the entry. Dated wood paneling was removed from the entry wall to reveal the original brick face of the house in excellent condition. The bead board ceiling and wood grained tile flooring, combined with the red brick add to the porch ambience.

Sunnyside Gardens was inspired by early 20th century English garden suburbs. Lewis Mumford generated ideas with other young reform-minded architects and planners; Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Grosvenor Atterbury designed the houses. Built between 1924 and 1928 by the City Housing Corporation, this planned community featured unique shared courtyard gardens and low scale houses with simple brick facades.

Built for families of moderate means, the brick homes differ only slightly in their design details. With a common exterior style, however, owners have been free to transform the interiors to their own taste. The exteriors facing the street and the shared entry paths present an egalitarian countenance, while the private interiors reflect individualism.

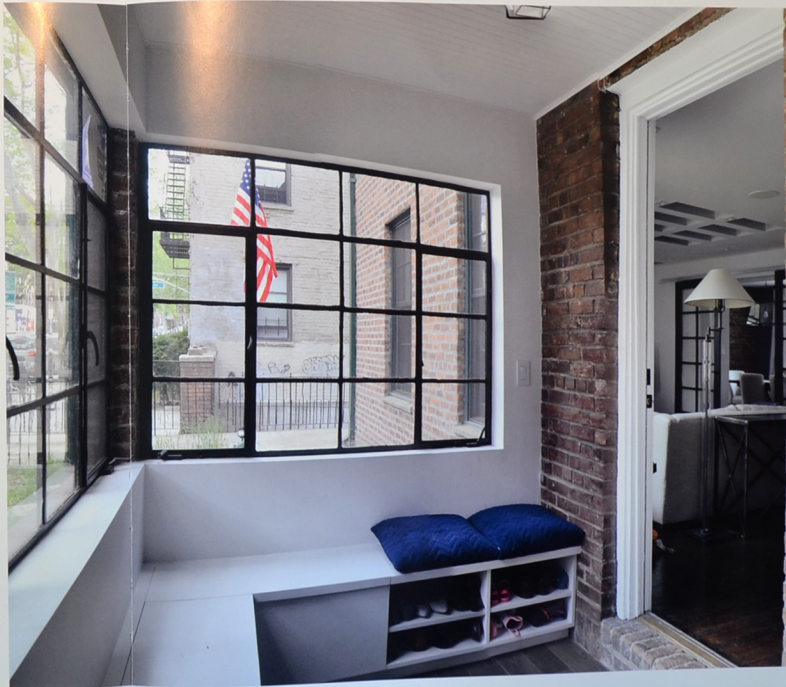
Architect Laura Heim has enormous respect for the thinking and planning that resulted in Sunnyside Gardens and her work demonstrates it. She has become the expert in restoring, renovating, and re-imagining these 90-years old houses while creating graceful modern interiors.

She was hired to restore a 1925 landmarked two family house, one of the largest in Sunnyside Gardens, on an enviable corner lot with three exposed sides. The new owners were the third generation to live there with the fourth on her way, disproving the adage that "no one is really from New York."

First, the complete restoration of the exterior had to be done according to Landmarks Preservation Commission standards. Second, the original two family house would be made into a single residence. The interior would be completely redesigned as a more open and refined space. All circulation would reconnect to the exterior landscape, a crucial element in the original concept of this garden suburb.

Ms. Heim broke down the existing small rooms, added windows, moved exterior doors, and gave full-on views of the garden from pretty much anywhere you stand. The interiors are lightly industrial, in soothing palettes dotted with fresh pops of color and detail. Every room suggests its boundaries through interesting ceiling fixtures or features.

Architecture in New York City is no longer a matter of either the restoration of the old or the construction of the new. Their cross pollination gives a vibrant texture to the city. This is the digital age after all — we reinterpret what we actually see rather than accept anything as it is.





From the front doorway, Hein saw the potential the space provided for the design concept. She reconfigured the interior as an open area that stretched almost the whole floor, allowing for flexible seating arrangements with good natural light.

264

The view extended across the floor through the dining room and out into the garden.

A narrow space behind the kitchen was transformed into a powder room, with custom made wood shelf from Maine.





Sunnyside Gardens is one of the premier planned housing communities in the United States. As it was built for families of moderate means, the brick homes differ only slightly in their design details, which can be seen in the exterior brickwork. With a common exterior style, however, the owners were free to transform the interiors to their own taste. While the face to the street and the shared entry paths present an egalitarian visage, the private interiors reflect individualism and even eccentricity. Sliding doors are used to maximize space while allowing the rooms to be separated.

One of the elements driving Hein's vision for the interior was to bring out the grid of the historic six-over-six exterior windows (painted in the traditional Sunnyside dark green on the street side) to become a character-defining feature on the inside. The language of the now black interior window grid extended to the interior sliding French doors. The industrial ambience on the interior was further expressed in the exposed brick walls and the kitchen's polished concrete counters and brushed stainless steel appliances and hood. The dining room light fixture contributes to the light industrial ambience with exposed bulbs and glass frame creating a transparent linear central articulation.





Upstairs, the central staircase was relocated to the side, allowing for an extra space to be created, which became both a study area and a sitting/living room. Sliding doors allow for the space to be closed off, with a corridor on the other side leading to the children's rooms and a guest room. Originally a window was where the door is now, which leads to the terrace at the front of the house. The ceiling articulates the volume of the room, cladding the exposed beams in plaster. The desk space was carved out of the hollow under the stairs. A built-in desk top is complemented by a bench of natural maple, custom designed and brought from Maine.



The house retains the classic green wood six-over-six wood windows, approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. A double window was installed in the dining room to provide more light and view.

The second floor guest bedroom was given its own bathroom by converting what had been a kitchen for the second floor tenants apartment. This room features a comfortable bed, and a full size dressing mirror, with an en suite bathroom. The floor-to-ceiling porcelain tile in the bathroom adds a hint of color visible through the room.

269





The fanlights above the door emphasize the height of the space, and the chandelier emphasizes the floating nature of the space. A custom wall hung vanity was placed under the Duravit sink with open space for neatly rolled towels. The shower is defined by a dark Porcelanosa tile wrapping around its enclosure leaving a light rear accent wall with a long penny tile cubby.



Many houses in the area have flat roofs, but here the sharply pitched roof offered the opportunity to move the master bedroom up and create a third, top floor. The relocated staircase allows access to the rear terrace door while maintaining privacy for the suite.

The room is infused with light and enhanced by the view of the structural roof ties, more openly spaced with concealed uplights dramatically illuminating the steep pitch.

The exposed brick of the end wall makes a warm contrast with the flat plastered walls.

