

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS





A multidisciplinary team suffuses a concrete and steel backdrop with warm design details and a comforting color scheme.

By Katie Orr

Photography by Nathan Kirkman

Dressed in the signature style of Gary Lee Partners, the smooth curves, linear highlights and toned-down hues of a four-story townhome on Lincoln Park's edge have collectively proven that gray is good; steel can be softened; and minimalism is more. For a process that typically ebbs and flows, this particular renovation leaned toward the latter. The architecture and design aesthetic reflect the seamless collaboration of all parties involved, including the client's family of five—husband, wife, son, daughter and their beloved Havanese, Hunter, who appears unruffled and pleased with his new digs.

Working from the original layout by LG Development Group, Gary Lee's team—which was led by design director Donna Corbat and project architect Joe Sperti, and included project designers Amanda Klingler and Laura Boruta—reconstructed the space substantially to accommodate the social component of the client's extended family and circle of friends. They wanted it to feel open, spacious and able to lend itself equally to holiday gatherings, television nights and dinner parties. Placed in the center of the vertical residence, effectively partitioning it in half, the enclosed staircase posed the biggest challenge. The team moved it away from the center, transformed it into two opposing triangles of steel adjoined by glass-encased railings and set it into a feature window

SHEER GLAM
Light shines through the sheer window treatments, which soften the rectilinear feel of the kitchen.



COZY ABODE

Backlit wooden cubicles pump up the glam of the master bathroom passage. Opposite page: The warmth of the living room comes through charcoal tones and the touch of a fireplace button by Connectoriors.



wall. “It appears to be a ribbon of steel, but it’s obviously engineered [by Goodfriend Magruder Structure],” says Sperti. “Whereas it previously felt interior and enclosed, now it’s much more of a sculptural element.” The stair hallway allows light and views to spill throughout the first and second floor.

Similar to the color palette of the stairs, raw metals, lavenders and subtle grays pervade the space—a beautiful anomaly that speaks to the warm, contemporary look sought by the homeowners. “Gray tones can be

perceived in the negative because we associate it with gray Chicago days,” says Corbat. “But it has a soothing, calming quality. It feels inviting and relaxing.” To align with this ambience, the team counteracted strong building materials with elegant fabrics and curves. “The architectural envelope was very crisp and clean with hard edges, so we added in soft shapes and sheers and sparkly accents to contrast more masculine pieces,” says Corbat. “The living space gets great daylight, so it needed sheer curtains to make the intense daylight more



subtle, and keep it from being too architectural,” adds Sperti. “The sheers allow a connection to the outside, but make the quality of light softer.” At sunset, they cast lovely diagonal shadows across the kitchen.

As with any quality project of this nature, elements of brilliance lie in unseen details. The team made all of the doors full height, creating a strong vertical line, and all of the walls were constructed with a modern, flush base trim. “When done well, it’s one of those details that you ‘feel’ more than you ‘see,’” says Sperti. “It creates a clean, streamlined feeling.” Masters of this

unseen-but-felt art form, Gary Lee’s team gained a grander statement for the master bedroom by working out a strong, wooden millwork wall of closet space that spans the bedroom and master closet passage and stands adjacent to backlit wood-and-glass cubicles for shoes and handbags. The team opened the original master bedroom to the bathroom/closet area in order to utilize lighting in the most functional way. While the bedroom has a high, horizontal window, ideal for sleeping, the bathroom now has a full wall of obscured glass. “There’s a film on the window, so it looks like etched glass,” says

VERTICAL PULL
The perfect Holly Hunt dining table rests beneath a dazzling Light Drizzle chandelier by Ochre in the living/dining space. Opposite page: Angles of glass and ribbons of steel support the structure of the stairs.





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Corbat. “When the light comes through, there’s a bright, crisp, clean feeling that’s great when you first wake up.” The morning light plays off of the Avir Suspension AXO light—a chandelier of crystal ribbons from Hydrology that appears to swim above the sculptural tub.

Downstairs, designers like Holly Hunt and Minotti make their mark on the living/dining area. A stunning custom Light Drizzle chandelier by Ochre hangs above the length of the dining table, acting as the aesthetic anchor for the room. In the kitchen, a white orchid cranes its neck over the Luce de Luna marble island, which is overseen by five Pod Modern pendant lights by Niche Modern. New Style fabricated the kitchen and master closet cabinetry; GLP partnered with Rode Brothers to create a custom gray stain for the flooring; and Connecteriors’ ingenuity gave the audiovisual system life: Touch an iPad screen and a shade lowers itself, the television snaps on and

the heating system activates.

With an element of romance, the renovation of the residence was done quietly over one year’s time, and the husband-homeowner orchestrated a special unveiling when the completion date came. “We sort of planned a mini reveal,” he says. “We scrambled to get it ready, and I told her we had some problems with the house. It was a great setup. She thought she was coming by to see if she could live with certain things.” On the eve of the unveiling, Gary Lee’s team placed art, table accessories, bedding, towels, flowers, even a stuffed monkey on the young daughter’s bed—just enough to make it feel like a home when the wife walked in. “It was just incredible to see everything come to life,” she says, “because it was all just ideas to me then. I was truly floored; I could see the love. Every day I walk through this house, and all I can say is ‘wow.’ It’s a true art form, what Gary Lee did.” ■

MASTER SWEET

A wooden wall of closet space surprisingly opens up to the master bedroom. Opposite page: An AXO chandelier sparkles above a sloped tub from Hydrology.



DESIGN DETAILS

TYPE
Townhome

LOCATION
Lincoln Park

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
LG Development Group

INTERIOR DESIGN
Gary Lee Partners

SOURCES
Goodfriend Magruder
Structure LLC
Stair Engineer

O'Brien Metal
Architectural metal panels on staircase

Amron Stair Works
Main stair fabricator

New Style Cabinets Inc.
Cabinets

Rode Brothers
Flooring

Connecteriors
Audio Visual

Stone Source
Tile & counter tops

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