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New Beginnings

A simple renovation gives this 1930s cottage and its new owner a fresh start.



Nashville real estate agent Lacey Newman was at a turning point in her life, and as one chapter ended, she was looking to start fresh with her two young children. She scoured the city for a home that would be the opposite of every house she'd lived in before. "I've had two new houses previously, and as a real estate agent I'm around new builds all the time," Lacey says. "The appeal of finding something older was just really strong. I was looking for a house that had really great, solid features, but needed some freshening up." When an old stone cottage in the Green Hills area caught her eye, she turned to friend and interior designer Julie Couch to transform it into the haven she'd been looking for.

"Lacey was one of my first clients about ten years ago, and we've worked on a few projects together since then," Julie says. "With this house, I knew what she would be drawn to and what she wouldn't like, so that made it easier." Ditching the dark wood and red brick that had filled the large, grand homes Lacey owned in the past, the pair went for a light and bright scheme. "She told me, 'I just want it to feel like me,'" Julie recalls. To create that feeling, Lacey wanted soft, feminine, and airy, so they went with white walls throughout the main areas and layered in neutrals. They avoided decorating with anything too precious or pristine, as she wanted it to be extremely livable—somewhere the kids can play and have a snack on the sofa without worrying.

*"When I bought this house, I was in a period
of reinventing myself. The renovation process
was an amazing outlet for me."*

—LACEY NEWMAN



Thanks to large windows dressed with thin custom white linen panels that allow plenty of natural light to filter in, the living room feels larger than its square footage. Gray and white floor poufs added to the well-appointed room help keep the atmosphere casual and kid friendly, while hints of color creep in through deep navy and green throw pillows, a bright pink watercolor painting mounted above the fireplace, and a smattering of fresh flowers and greenery.

Unsatisfied with the dated, cramped kitchen design that played up the Formica countertops and red-and-yellow color scheme of the 90s, Lacey decided a full renovation was in order. She had the dining area and kitchen integrated into one open room, with an island and a large dining table defining the two spaces. Fresh white walls were complemented with pale gray cabinets. "I really love the wooden table in the dining room," she says, noting the slipcovered bench and big leather wing chairs are among her favorite things about the new kitchen. "I just adore that room because it's really the heart of the house. You can see the fireplace and the front door and the kitchen. Sitting there with friends and the kids is one of my favorite things to do."





From bedding to carpeting, Julie used several shades of pale pink to make Lacey's daughter's rose-colored dreams come true. To avoid the color being overwhelming, she found a light pink paint and added white to lighten it. Dainty curtains from Restoration Hardware Kids complete the space.



Rounding out the main level of the home are her children's bedrooms and a shared bathroom. With Julie's help, Lacey was able to capture a hint of each child's personality to work into the little spaces. "Her son had a hand in picking everything for his room, within reason," Julie says. "We went for the light gray so it can easily change as he gets older. We don't want to make everything Batman now and then have to change it in a couple of years." Lacey's daughter, a few years older and more decisive, wanted pink. Julie used a toned down version of the dreamy hue on the walls and complemented it with light pink curtains with gray rosettes to make the room a little girl's dream. Just as the old cottage was revived, furniture from Lacey's past finally found new life in the children's rooms. "The brass and iron day-bed in my daughter's room was my bed as a little girl," Lacey says. "And the bedside table and triple dresser in my son's room belonged to my mother as a teenager—so it's authentically Mid-century modern."

Style Idea

When decorating a room for a small child, start with a base of light colors and neutrals, then add colorful throw pillows and accessories to reflect their personality or favorite characters. This makes it easier to match décor to a child's ever-changing favorites.



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While the main floor is the family space, upstairs is what Lacey describes as her “own little retreat” with an office, bedroom, bathroom and laundry. “Upstairs is my domain, and the rest of the house is kind of the kid area,” she says. For her master bedroom, she chose a white paint with undertones of blue and decorated with white, pale gray, and neutral bedding and furniture, resulting in a crisp, peaceful atmosphere.

Despite new furniture and the changes made throughout the space, Lacey and Julie sought to preserve the charming details of the cottage. From the antique

glass doorknobs to the original drafty-yet-perfect windows to the small hexagonal tiles in the children’s bathroom, the little features that pack the home with character remain unchanged. Nestled in the middle of a neighborhood full of houses of the same era, going home for Lacey is like taking a step back to a more nostalgic time. “It may be old, but it’s classic and it’s great,” Lacey says. “Buying something timeless like this, but freshening it up and bringing it up to modern design standards has been so fun. It’s just a happy house. The kids love it, and I love it. It’s really a dream.”

TEXT BY MARY-KATE TUETO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALYSSA ROSENHECK



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Rather than purchase all-new accessories, Lacey incorporated a number of small collections her mother brought home for her from trips to antiques shows and shops. Those treasures include everything from an array of kerosene hurricane lamps to a large wooden chest. "My mom is a very integral part to my decorating," she says. "I'm not a big shopper, but she goes antiquing all the time."

