

Total Transformation

Birmingham designer converts a once-humble rental into a beautiful home // Photography by Boswell

By

Khristi S. Zimmeth December 1, 2021

Beige carpet, beige walls, and lots of closed-in rooms” is how interior designer Jeffrey King, of Jeffrey King Interiors, describes the 1,400-square-foot Birmingham rental he moved into almost three decades ago.

It wasn’t exactly his dream house. “It had been a rental for years and years,” he explains. “There was absolutely nothing that attracted me to the house, other than that it was available.” Owned by a client and built in 1920, the Saltbox-style home was one of three identical models on George Street.

The fact that he’s still there is a testament both to his talents as an interior designer and to the power of potential.

Once the home was his, King moved in and started improving. Up came all the old carpet, and down came some walls to open up the once-boxy space. He rearranged the kitchen and turned a small upstairs bedroom into a dressing room. “In those days, it was all about decorating,” he says.



The kitchen's stainless steel brick-pattern backsplash adds pizzazz.

Soon his life began changing, too. "The house was a bachelor pad for a while but not for long," he says. He began dating David, now his husband, and the couple soon adopted three daughters. The house, purchased in 1995, had to evolve to meet the family's changing needs. That led to a major renovation, as two bedrooms upstairs became colorful children's rooms.

"The kids motivated the addition," King explains. "At the time, we started wondering if we should stay or move. We looked at all the options and decided to stay."

Around the same time, an elementary school across the street was torn down and the space was converted into a park. "Having a lot with no neighbors across the street is a big deal in Birmingham," King says, adding that it was another reason the family decided to stay put.

The addition added 1,000 square feet to the back of the house, including a family room downstairs and a master suite up, as well as a 500-square-foot playroom and exercise room in the basement. When they were done, the house measured 2,500 square feet, with three bedrooms and three and a half baths.

Once they had more space, King turned once again to decorating. He calls the house's style a "transitional blend," adding that it "definitely has touches of contemporary, and a clean and uncluttered look, but it's still warm." The couple's "very eclectic mixture" of art, including photography and original oils, is found throughout.

The ensuing years brought a new garage and landscaping, a new roof, and "lots of little projects," the designer says. Rooms have evolved, along with the family, and the onetime basement playroom is now a mini-theater with a big-screen television. King calls it "a super comfy space."

All changes, he says, have been true to the house's original architecture and spirit. The kitchen renovation is a good example of King's signature blend of contemporary and classic, he says. He kept the original textured walls and added both beadboard and wainscoting. "We took the look and carried it through the house," he explains. "I call it modern farmhouse with contemporary."

He considers the family room one of the home's highlights, and it's where he often spends time hanging out with his husband or their two dogs, Levi and Hudson. "It's a cozy spot in the back of the house with a big TV and lots of windows," King explains. The first floor's open circle plan makes it ideal for parties. "It's a wonderful entertaining house," he says. "It has good size and great traffic flow."

Decorating his own home was both easier and harder than working with clients, he says. It's been easier because he knows what he wants and likes, and can

make a quick decision. It's also been harder, he says with a laugh, because "there are so many options" and "then you have to live with it."

While King never expected to stay, he's glad he did. The once-humble rental turned out to be the perfect home for his family, he says, and it's just a six-minute commute to his nearby office. He and David love the park across the street, and the neighborhood's convenience to downtown Birmingham. "The house has been a blessing," King says. "It looks so much better now than it did when I moved in. It's become our own little slice of paradise."

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INTERIOR DESIGN

Jeffrey King, designer, Jeffrey King Interiors,
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David King, operations manager, Jeffrey King Interiors,
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Bar Stools – Sunpan