

# A NEW LIFE

JUST LIKE ITS OWNERS, A 1990S  
RIVERFRONT HOME IN JACKSONVILLE  
STARTS OVER

*R*elocating from a longtime residence in New England to a waterfront home in Florida isn't always easy. After all, it isn't only a move, but also a new life.

For one couple, the transition from 45 years in Connecticut to a completely different milieu, on the St. John's River in Jacksonville, was made easier by working with an architect who understood their need to hold on to their history while easing into a carefree retirement lifestyle. They chose

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Architect  
ARCHITECTURE**

**Kim Clarkson  
Kim Clarkson Design  
INTERIOR  
DESIGN**

**David Meyers,  
D. W. Meyers  
Constructors, Inc  
BUILDER**

New York architect Eric Smith, with whom they had worked in the past.

"We asked Eric to give us a home that combined the coolness and openness of Florida homes with the charm and warmth of our New England





During the renovation of the 1990s riverfront home, Smith started by reorganizing the formal living spaces, which were originally divided into individual rooms. He removed walls and combined these into one great room that functions as a living room, dining room and library. "It is the hub of the house now," he says. "All activity moves through that space: dining, entertaining, relaxing with a book, movie watching."







In addition to opening up the space, Smith moved the fireplace and redesigned it as a wood-burning structure that gave a sense of hearth. Because the owners love books and the feel of a library, three walls were lined with bookshelves.

Georgian," the owner explains. "We wanted it to be traditional in feel while maintaining a contemporary use of space."

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els concealing the wet bar and entertainment center were designed to look like library cabinets (false books on the panels allow the doors to open).

Smith also added oversized French doors and a bay window, an element that is repeated in the breakfast room and master bedroom, to grant a panoramic view of the water. He finished the space with an oak-beamed ceiling, reclaimed wood floors sourced from farmhouses in New England and hand-applied French plaster walls.

The space, the architect says, "is gracious with an informality to it. There was a conscious commitment to that."

The same materials and surfaces are used in variation throughout the house. "The timbers, the floors and the walls become the final finish and the substance of the room," Smith says. "It's more of



an architectural project." And it wasn't a simple one. According to builder David Meyers, "you have to have an owner who's a patron of the arts, almost, to do a project like this."

As an example, Meyers cites the use of the reclaimed wood. "The planks came directly from barns where animals were being kept, soaking wet and complete with barnyard smells," he notes. "The wood had to be reconditioned and properly dried for several months before we made a floor out of it."

The oak timbers also were no easy feat. "It was a 10-to-12-step process to finish the oak beams, columns and timber trusses," Meyers explains.

But therein lies the charm of the house, which interior designer Kim Clarkson calls "European country meets North Carolina mountains meets

Florida." The same detail that went into the architectural processes went into the interiors, as well. Clarkson used mostly existing furniture from the owners' New England home, lightening the color palette and fabrics for Florida living.

"She has lovely antiques and beautiful Oriental carpets," Clarkson says of the wife. "She wanted to incorporate all this in a space that is both large and intimate, traditional and contemporary."

In the great room, the designer began with a cream damask Brunschwig & Fils fabric - a favorite of the wife - on the dining chairs, sofas and armchairs. She highlighted the neutral damask with a Lee Jofa floral linen fabric, used on the chairs by the bay window, coral fabric on the antique wing chair, and cream linen velvet on a love seat.

"It's light and bright," she says. "It works very well

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LEFT: The white kitchen is enhanced by the wife's blue-and-white porcelain collection and an antique French chandelier. A wide-plank pine floor was made with reclaimed wood from old farms in New England. "The planks came directly from barns where animals were being kept, soaking wet and complete with barnyard smells," builder David Meyers explains. "The wood had to be reconditioned and properly dried for several months before we made a floor out of it."

ABOVE: A cozy family room sits beneath exposed oak trusses. The same timber element is used in the adjacent kitchen, albeit in a different arrangement.

RIGHT: In the master bedroom, located on the ground floor, the design rhythm was inspired by the architecture, namely the newly installed bay window and tray ceiling. A desk arrangement creates a small study in the window nook, providing a working space within the serene room.





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with the abundance of natural light and shows off her antiques and art and architectural details.”

In the master bedroom, located on the ground floor, the design rhythm was inspired by the architecture, namely the newly installed bay window and tray ceiling. A desk arrangement creates a small study in the window nook, providing a working space within the serene room.

Smith lowered a cathedral ceiling to install the tray, which is a more formal departure from the timberness of the rest of the house. The ceiling, combined with French plaster walls in a parchment stain, gives the effect of gracious Old World European living.

Clarkson’s color palette of cream and French blue, seen in the antique Oushak rug and the French

linen drapery fabrics, is an elegant iteration of European country motifs.

The master bath was redesigned to feel like a spa, with Crema Marfil marble on the floors and shower stall. As elsewhere in the house, the architect redesigned this room to meet ADA requirements, which was an important consideration for the homeowners.

The exterior was changed, too. “The home is nestled underneath dominant live oak trees that lend a wonderful sense of permanence,” Smith says.

“We opened up the driveway and courtyard to give a sense of arrival under these trees,” Smith explains. “The garage was a sudden event, so we added a trellis there. On the façade, we replaced the old tabby exterior with more of a palm-texture

stucco that caught the light with an undulating, interesting texture. It gives the impression of age.”

Smith reorganized windows and added working shutters with straps in a blue-gray tone reminiscent of French country houses. He changed the roof material to a textured, hand-split cedar shake, with copper accents over the bay windows.

He added oak in the front and rear of the house, most notably around the landing, which is defined by exposed trusses and columns that give a sense of wood mass, something that is also felt inside.

Inside and out, the house is “enormously welcoming,” Smith says. “From arrival to moving through it, it’s a graceful space for two people or 20.” ▲

Partly covered terraces provide a wonderful space for outdoor dining and entertaining while enjoying a panoramic view of the St. John’s River.