

Midwest Living

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Steal smart ideas from a renovated Chicago-area Colonial to add character, style and family-friendly function to your home.

It's in the details



Details, details. Sure, some people see them as a drag. But not Fred Wilson. The Chicago architect knows smart detailing can enhance a home—and keep your budget looking pretty darn good, too, by skirting the expense of a to-the-studs remodel. That lesson comes through in Wilson's work on a remodeled 1920 Colonial, where artful architectural touches and easy room changes add to the home's traditional look, yet accommodate the family's contemporary lifestyle.

Moldings and trim add both age and character to the reborn rooms. Yet these and other eye-catching details needn't cost a fortune. Check out a dozen-plus ideas taken from this refreshed house that could make a big difference in your home, too.

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IT'S IN THE DETAILS

“Borrowing light and creating flow between spaces is key. The house encourages you to move from room to room, so you don't end up with spaces nobody ever uses.”

Fred Wilson, architect

▲ **Add light/sight** Widen standard door openings with fixed sidelights to extend sight lines and light from room to room.

▼ **Enliven walls** Use stock trim pieces to create the effect of an expensive paneled wall. Surround a geometrical grouping of portraits for additional visual impact.

The idea that jump-started the renovation required no construction muss or fuss: A too-small den near the front door became a cozy dining room that homeowner Cory loves. “The first thing people see when they come through the door is a room that's always nice and neat,” she says. And the original dining room? It's now a much-used family room, conveniently adjacent to the kitchen, making it easier for Cory, her husband and their two daughters to spend time together.

The first floor flows more smoothly now, too, after Wilson cleverly widened interior doorways with fixed-panel sidelights. “They give you the poetry of French doors without their cost—or the expense of the hardware you'd need to make them operable,” he says.

Throughout the home, architectural trims found in older homes, such as crown moldings, were installed, and are fairly easy to replicate with stock trim from your local home improvement store, Wilson says. Other “high-impact, lower-cost” choices: New cabinet hardware or accent-tile backsplashes offer a quick style boost for kitchens or baths. But don't stop there. See if any of the other smart, stylish ideas in this rejuvenated house can translate into your home. Wilson says, “Every project has a budget. It's just a matter of picking and choosing how to get the most bang from your buck.”

For resources see page 151.





Dress up a ceiling Add detailed richness to an intimate dining room by applying stock molding to a drywall ceiling.



▲ Enhance an entry

Add a pillared portico to bring new emphasis to an entry. Sidelights and transoms will flood a foyer with light.

▼ Create contrasts

Achieve architectural interest by setting white risers and spindles against stained treads, newels and railings. Edge-banding the carpet runner adds to the look.



IT'S IN THE DETAILS

“With the family room now adjacent to the kitchen, I feel like we’re all spending time together even if I’m in here cooking.”
Homeowner

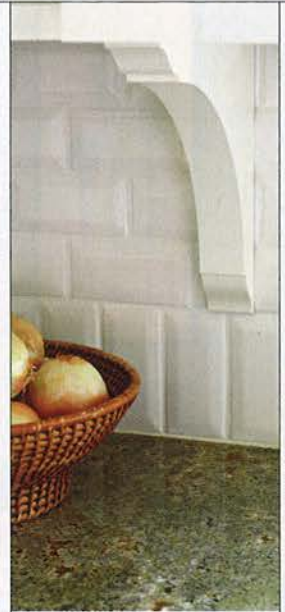
Hide everyday items So much of what’s stored in a kitchen isn’t stuff you want in plain view. Be smart: Dress up existing cabinets with door fronts that include glass display windows only across the tops. They lend old-fashioned charm without revealing everything inside.





▲ **Change out hardware** Inject a little drama into an all-white kitchen with new knobs and drawer pulls. In Cory's kitchen, black metal cup pulls really pop.

▼ **Add an accent window** An oval window offers an appealing alternative to a standard rectangle. Use divided-light glass doors on display cabinets. Brighten things up even more with lights inside the cabinets. Combined with task lighting below, they make the pantry glow.



► **Boost interest with tile**

Lay inexpensive white subway tile vertically and horizontally to bring subtle style to a kitchen backsplash. Decorative brackets are another nostalgic, character-rich (and easy-to-install) feature.



► **Rethink a sink**

A narrow, rectangular, stainless-steel trough sink adds style to the pantry. Plus, it's handy for cleanups. Filled with ice, it becomes a self-serve beverage cooler during parties.



► **Install a pullout**

A pullout counter, like this one in Cory's pantry, offers function and flexibility. Supported by retractable brackets, the ledge makes a handy spot to assemble drinks or dessert, then slides away when not in use.





IT'S IN THE DETAILS

This house had the elegant proportions and beautiful details of a fine, old North Shore home, but it didn't fit the lifestyle of the people who'd want to live in it today. We were after a vibe where you could have lots of family or friends over and kick back and be connected in any room.

Fred Wilson, architect



◀ Sneak in storage

A built-in family room cabinet offers multiple storage options. A large flat-panel TV hides behind doors, while speakers sit in cabinetry above. Two deep drawers below, detailed to look like eight small drawers, provide the perfect cache for games that come out on family fun nights.



◀ Stretch your tile budget

Basic ceramic tiles cover large areas of the master bath, while pricier mosaic glass pieces appear only as accents inside shelves and on the backsplash.

▶ "Raise" ceilings

These bedroom draperies hung above the windows create the illusion of taller ceilings. So do vertical-stripe curtains. Create a custom look with a single fabric by adding a ruffle in the same pattern.





▲ **Create niches** Uncover extra storage area in rooms like the master bath by utilizing space between wall studs.

▼ **Add an easy custom look** Frame a bathroom wall mirror for a simple, yet impactful touch. Floating a stock drawer unit between a pair of vanities creates a custom, furniture-style look and offers extra counter space.



▲ **Dress up a mudroom** Easy-to-install beaded board and trim add cottage style to a hardworking back entry. A bench offers a seat for changing shoes, while large cabinets conceal coats, sports clutter and more.

▼ **Get a gallery look** Moldings connecting stairwell windows act as graphic "frames" for family photos. ■

