



PROJECT FACT SHEET

***This Old House* New York City Project: Ten New Episodes**

Project II: Winter/Spring 2008-09

This Old House takes on its first-ever New York City renovation with a Renaissance Revival townhouse (circa 1904) located in the historic Prospect Heights area of Brooklyn. The former rooming house will be transformed into a three-family home over the course of 10 brand-new episodes.

PBS Premiere:

Brand-new episodes of the *This Old House* New York City project premiere nationally on PBS beginning Thursday, January 22, 2009.
(check www.thisoldhouse.com/tvschedule or your local listings)

Reviving a Former Rooming House in Brooklyn

This Old House selected a Brooklyn brownstone to be the subject of the show's first-ever New York City renovation. Located in historic Prospect Heights, the 1904 Renaissance Revival townhouse was a former rooming house that will be transformed into a three-family home. Refurbishing well-worn period details while adding modern conveniences will repair years of neglect while updating the house for 21st century living. The *This Old House* experts will work alongside general contractor Michael Streaman and a talented team of local craftspeople to restore these elements, while selecting additional materials to match the existing characteristics of the home.

Homeowners Kevin Costello and Karen Shen fulfilled a lifelong dream with their recent purchase of the Brooklyn townhouse. In order to make this dream a reality, they had to come up with an affordable plan to defray mortgage costs. The solution was to turn part of the townhouse into rental units. Once the renovation is complete, the owners plan to rent both the garden and third floor levels, leaving the middle two floors as living space for themselves and their three young children. As the family grows, they hope to one day afford to reclaim the third floor for their private use.

Homeowner's Two-Floor Unit

Before the renovation began, the roughly 4,000-sq.-ft. townhouse consisted of eight rooming units and the previous owner occupied one entire floor. When finished, the home will boast two rental units and a homeowner's unit that provides roughly 2,450-sq.-ft. of living space.



Parlor Floor:

- Entry to the homeowner's unit can be made from two places. The homeowners can walk up the front stoop/porch stairs through the entrance doors into a vestibule that leads into a common hall with doors to the living room on the parlor floor. Alternatively, the homeowners can enter the garden level below the front stoop into a vestibule shared by the renters. This will bring them to the garden extension.
- The parlor floor will consist of an eat-in kitchen, powder room with a green and biscuit color palette, large coat closet, living room and small library area around an interior spiral staircase that leads to the second floor.
- Stacked wall custom-built maple cabinetry will be painted a soft gray-green and will allow the family to maximize the spacious kitchen, which has high ceilings.
- State-of-the-art stainless steel appliances will be incorporated throughout the kitchen.
- New white oak wood floors will be put in the kitchen, and a peninsula facing the dining area and windows to the backyard will provide counter space and a sink.
- The homeowners purchased a vintage 1930s cast iron staircase online. This staircase will provide the family access between the parlor and second floor. Once installed, the staircase will wind up from the parlor floor and finish in the closet/passage area between the master bedroom and rear bedroom. A large pocket door will separate these two areas.

Second Floor:

- The second floor will have a master bedroom, a large bedroom for the kids, and a bathroom.
- Located on the north end of the second floor is a master bedroom with a walk-in-closet and original built-in closet with drawers. The master bedroom is approximately 19ft. x 18ft. with the walk-in closet/changing area adding an additional 84-sq.-ft.
- A central closet area on the second floor with original bird's-eye maple woodwork on the doors and moldings will link to a large bedroom in the south end that will be shared by the children.
- The family will share the fully-renovated second floor bathroom, which will feature a garden-facing window, dark-stained cherry double vanity, deep shower/tub combination, mirrored medicine cabinet hung above the vanity and an unglazed porcelain floor tiling with a teal blue and olive green color palette.

Garden Level Extension:

- An approximately 100-sq.-ft. portion of the home's garden level will provide access to the cellar as well as the rear yard. The cellar will house all of the mechanicals of the home and will include a small workshop space for the homeowner.
- The garden level will also host a small mudroom that doubles as the homeowner's occasional guest room, as well as a guest bathroom with shower in a soft gray and white color palette. A stacked washer and dryer will act as the homeowner's laundry space.

Plumbing & Heating:

- Existing plumbing in the brownstone included a combination of old galvanized, lead and cast iron piping for the drainage system, along with old lead and brass piping for the domestic water system. This will be taken out to make way for all new piping.
- Radiant floor heating will be used for the homeowners' parlor floor, second floor master bathroom and their garden level rear extension. The heat is distributed evenly throughout the entire floor with virtually no temperature variations. It is quiet, energy efficient and can operate with much lower water temperatures than conventional hot water heating systems. Modulating and condensing (modcon) boilers allow for efficiencies of up to 95 percent. The original radiators, once converted to hot water, will remain in the rental units.
- The crew will install a staple-up radiant system for the parlor floor kitchen and family room, while the master bathroom will be outfitted with radiant coils in the mortar bed beneath the tile floor.
- The one-pipe steam system will be replaced by a forced hot-water heating system to improve fuel efficiency by approximately 25 percent.
- Each room will be controlled by its own wireless thermostat, which will increase energy savings as unoccupied rooms can be turned down.
- All toilets in the house (homeowner and tenants) feature eco-friendly dual flush technology that has a 1.6 or .8 gallon per flush option. These toilets can save as much as 6,000 gallons of water annually over traditional models.

Rental Units

In order to save money on the mortgage, the homeowner's opted to create two rental units in the townhouse. As the family grows, they hope to one day afford to reclaim the third floor for their private use.

Garden level unit:

- This level is accessible by entry on the ground floor through a shared vestibule.
- The approximately 700-sq.-ft. unit will consist of a kitchen, bathroom, living room, laundry closet and a bedroom.
- The kitchen will feature dark cherry cabinets, cream and gray linoleum floors, and a peninsula with a sink facing the living room.
- A full bathroom in a white and gray color palette will include a single cherry vanity, tub/shower combination, and unglazed porcelain tile floors.
- An original mantle will remain in the living room, along with tongue and groove paneling wrapped around the room.
- A separate gas meter will be added for the garden floor tenant, along with a separate heat and domestic hot water system.
- Eco-friendly dual flush toilets will be used for water savings.

Third floor unit:

- Renters will enter through the main entrance doors at the top of the stoop where they will enter the vestibule area and go up two flights of stairs to their unit.
- The approximately 850-sq.-ft. unit will have a kitchen, bathroom, living/dining room, laundry closet and a bedroom with an adjacent study and separate closet area.

- A galley-style kitchen will feature cream-colored cabinets, white appliances, and a black and cream diamond-patterned tile floor.
- The bathroom will have a dark cherry vanity, tub/shower combination, robin's egg blue unglazed porcelain floor tiling, and biscuit subway tiling on the walls.
- Fireplaces with original brick glazed porcelain tile work will be found in the living room and bedroom.
- The third-floor heat will operate off of the homeowner's boiler. This was done so that no alterations will be needed should the homeowners take over that level.
- A combination of existing hot-water heating radiators and new hydronic towel warmers will be used in the bathroom.
- Eco-friendly dual flush toilets will be used for water savings.

Restoring Period Details of the Brownstone

Because the property is located in a neighborhood that is calendared to become a landmarked district, the new construction project is required to go through an approval process with the local Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and the New York City Building Department. This mainly applies to the street façade of the building. As such the work submitted for proposal is minimal on the front of the building. The homeowners also had a great interest in keeping the charm of the interior with as many period details as possible. This includes items such as the plaster cove moldings, original doors with egg and dart accents, grand pocket doors, fretwork, and the fireplaces and mantles.

- The ornate entry hall will be restored to feature a mirrored foyer, wood staircase and turned wood balustrade, wainscot paneled walls, fretwork arches, room dividers, and a handsome wood bench-and-mirror combination in the living room.
- The fretwork partition measuring 12ft. x 9ft. was moved from the kitchen of the former rooming house and was reinstalled in the homeowner's unit as a divider for the living room and the small library space near the stairway.
- On the garden level, existing oak wainscot will be removed and refitted after relocating the entrance door to the basement floor apartment.
- The central closet area in the third floor rental unit will feature original bird's-eye maple woodwork on the doors and molding.
- The crew will recycle existing doors, jambs and casings in new locations throughout the entire brownstone. A local master wood refinisher, John Thomas, has the daunting task of bringing back the various wood finishes, including original deteriorating shellac, to make all of the woodwork blend.
- New plaster ceiling medallions inspired by woodwork details in the house will be created for the kitchen, living room and front foyer. Existing plaster crown moldings in the living room will be used as templates to recreate similar moldings for the kitchen and library area.
- The cast iron spiral staircase installed between the homeowner's parlor level and second floor will contribute to the period feel of the interior.

Maximizing Entertaining Space and Children's Outdoor Play Area

With three small children, the homeowners are looking for a lawn area as play space. *This Old House* will work along side a local crew from Chelsea Gardens to create an area for outdoor entertaining.

- Upon exiting the garden level extension, the patio is one step up to a brick terrace with an arched iron arbor overhead.
- The 400-sq.-ft. patio is Pine Hall brick with a herringbone pattern. It will be large enough to permit a portable BBQ grill and table seating for six to eight guests.
- A decorative cast stone planter will be placed on a rear dark cement slab, which will serve as the transition area from the house to the patio. This container will likely hold a specimen weeping evergreen.
- Located behind the patio is a small retaining wall with two steps to the green area of the yard. The sandbox and swing set will be placed in this yard area.
- Trees will be pruned or removed where possible to increase the limited sunshine blocked by surrounding trees and an apartment building that abuts the rear property line.
- Shade tolerant sod will be used to help combat the lack of sun and plants will be selected that are moderate to dense shade tolerant.
- The garden and planting beds have minimal space due to the overall size constraints of the backyard. Four trees will be introduced to add verticality to the site and makes the transition from the patio to the rear play area.
- In the front of the house, decorative planters will be placed on the stoop along with a specimen tree or evergreen for visual interest.
- Assorted perennials will be incorporated into the planting in mid-to-late spring after further consultations with the homeowners.

On the Road with *This Old House*:

This Old House's first-ever NYC project kicks off in Times Square, where host Kevin O'Connor and master carpenter Norm Abram open the show. From there, they take a ride over the Brooklyn Bridge and arrive at the project site in Prospect Heights. Throughout the course of the project, the crew takes a look at landmarks, historic homes and interesting sites both in and around Brooklyn.

Kevin and landscape contractor Roger Cook visit Brooklyn's Prospect Park, a 585-acre oasis designed by famed Central Park landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. Later, in the East Village, Kevin meets up with architectural historian Charles Lockwood at the Merchant's House Museum to see how people used to live in New York in this preserved 1832 rowhouse. Charles then demonstrates the contrast of how brownstones have been updated for 21st century living during a tour of a privately-owned home in Park Slope. Roger feels the fire when he meets up with Hell's Kitchen's nurseryman David Protell to see his urban garden center. Then they head South to see a spectacular roof garden in Tribeca that his firm designed and built, featuring mature plantings, decking, container gardens - and even a hammock surrounded by trees.

Later, Kevin and Richard open a show in Lower New York Harbor, taking in the city skyline, the commercial boat traffic, the Statue of Liberty and Liberty Island.

A few neighborhoods over from the project house, in Red Hook, Kevin meets plaster contractor Stuart Sobczynski at his basement workshop to see how he is replicating the plaster crown moldings for the house and casting three new ceiling medallions inspired by the home's existing woodwork.

For a Look Behind-the-Scenes:

Thisoldhouse.com/webcams will feature progress of the New York City project 24/7 through four Webcams powered by EarthCam. Visitors to www.thisoldhouse.com also will be able to access other special features, such as a "before" photo gallery, project overview, and a time-lapse archive where an in-depth look at the project's progress may be tracked once the transformation has concluded. *This Old House* magazine will feature the New York City project starting with the January/February 2009 issue. Additionally, the homeowners and show producers maintain a behind-the-scenes blog about the project at www.oldhousemyhouse.thisoldhouse.com.

***This Old House* Crew:**

Host Kevin O'Connor
Master Carpenter Norm Abram
General Contractor Tom Silva
Plumbing and Heating Expert Richard Trethewey
Landscape Contractor Roger Cook
Design Correspondent Carole Freehauf

Project Team:

General Contractor Michael Streaman
Architect Susanne Lyn, RA
Landscape Design/Build: David Protell, Chelsea Gardens
Local Plumbing and Heating Contractors: Randy & Erik Gitli, Aladdin Plumbing
Electrician: Vincent Verderosa, Super-Charged Electric

***This Old House* Production Team:**

Vice President, Television Operations Michael Burton
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Producer Deborah Hood
Associate Producer Jennifer Wells
Production Coordinator Heath Racela
Senior Editor Gary Stephenson
Editor Adam Bush
Cameraman Stephen D'Onofrio

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