

New England HOME

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THE* Stillness



The entryway on the garden level offers views down the hall to the den and up the home's original carved-wood staircase to the parlor level. **FACING PAGE:** Designer Liz Miller and BSA Construction's Dave O'Malley helped their clients transform a brownstone in Boston's South End. Miller combined old and new by hanging contemporary light fixtures—like the three-armed AERIN for Visual Comfort & Co. piece here—from existing plaster ceiling medallions.

Making Space

COLLABORATING WITH A YOUNG COUPLE
RELOCATING TO BOSTON, LIZ MILLER CREATES
SMART, AIRY INTERIORS THAT LEAVE ROOM TO GROW.

Text by ANDREW SESSA | *Photography by* JOYELLE WEST



ABOVE: The team made smart use of space, building storage for kitchen and dining items into alcoves on either side of the kitchen fireplace. **LEFT:** The sleekest and tiniest of sinks cantilevers from a wall in the long, narrow powder room. **FACING PAGE:** A bar and storage for toys hides behind a panel between the kitchen and living area.



It's tough to say what's harder about moving from a Manhattan loft to a Boston brownstone: switching your style from a wide-open living space to one that's just twenty feet across or switching your baseball allegiance from the Yankees to the Sox.

Interior designer Liz Miller recently showed herself highly capable of guiding transplanting clients with the former. (She left the latter to others.)

A South End brownstone represented "a different way of living for them," Miller says of the young homeowners, who were on the cusp of starting a family. "We had to forecast how they would live there." To Miller, a mom of two, "forecasting" meant



helping her clients make the most of the space. She wanted them to be able to grow into it, and she wanted it to be able to evolve with them.

Collaborating with builder Dave O'Malley of BSA Construction, Miller worked to combine the couple's contemporary-leaning vibe with the turn-of-the-twentieth-century building's historic charms—plaster ceiling medallions, a carved-wood stair balustrade, and gilt-framed pier mirror among them. "A renovation by previous owners had thankfully left a lot of original character," O'Malley notes. "Our task was to do the same: update the spaces while respecting the origins."

The design-build team conceived a plan that did just that while also emphasizing some lofty modern ideals, not least airiness, light, and flexibility. "Open space can make some people nervous," Miller says, "but when you have small kids you need it—for train tracks, for art projects, for friends who come over with their children. Space gives flexibility."

So her scheme errs on the side of minimalism, leaving room

LEFT: The dining table in the parlor level's street-front window bay "could be family friendly at the same time as formal," explains Miller. **FACING PAGE:** It was important to Miller to allow her clients—a young couple with a baby on the way—room to grow. The kitchen's window bay remains open, rather than filled with a banquette or window seat, and the island is small enough to allow for a play area between it and the nearby fireplace.



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Miller turned the den at the back of the garden level into a multipurpose space. The TV-watching zone includes a leather Interior Define sectional that also corrals a play space for the kids. **FACING PAGE:** A fully stocked bar is accented by artwork by Sarah Madeira Day.

around each piece of clean-lined, tailored furniture and between the dining, seating, and kitchen areas of the parlor level. She painted most walls there and throughout the garden and lower levels in various shades of white.

In further pursuit of loftiness, Miller and O'Malley removed odd angles from the opening at the back of the parlor level's living area, expanding it to improve circulation and create a visual connection to the kitchen. To increase flexibility, they jack-and-jilled the garden

level's guest suite bathroom, connecting it to a reimagined multipurpose den, where they added a custom built-in desk and bar.

Serene blue-accented decor nods to the homeowners' love of the color and of beach style. "They spend lots of time on Cape Cod," says Miller, who kept the references subtle "since we're still in a Boston brownstone."

Thanks to Miller and O'Malley, the homeowners have adjusted to their new Boston life with ease (even during



LEFT: Miller and O'Malley reorganized and completely gutted the primary bathroom to accommodate the clients' request for a freestanding soaking tub. **BELOW:** Pops of color on the tile floor and pineapple-embazoned Hygge & West wallpaper bring some fun to the laundry room. **FACING PAGE:** The couple's love of, and frequent visits to, Cape Cod inspired Miller's subtle use of blue to help brighten the darker lower level, which includes the primary bedroom.

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baseball season). And this smartly designed home has proven itself easily able to flex: now parents to two young children, the couple has found it works well for them, says Miller. “That’s one of the best things we can hear. Our job as interior designers is to add function while enhancing the style of a house to fit its owners’ lifestyle. We know we’ve done our job well when a home lasts.”

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

INTERIOR DESIGN: Liz Miller Interiors
BUILDER: BSA Construction

