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# BUILDER

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## Builder's Choice Awards

FORMER BANK IS  
PROJECT OF THE YEAR

■ **Hometown Heroes**  
DESIGN WINNERS FROM  
7 LOCAL COMPETITIONS

■ **Profits**  
50 WAYS TO BOOST  
YOUR MARGINS



**Category**  
Adaptive re-use project

**Exterior/Architect/  
Interior designer**  
Braver & Haugman  
Architects, Philadelphia

**Builder**  
Glass Construction,  
Washington, D.C.

**Landscape architect**  
Defme, van Sweden &  
Associates, Washington,  
D.C.

**Kitchen designer**  
Blue Bell Kitchens,  
Spring House, Pa.

**PRIVATE RESIDENCE**  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1995

**T**his project sends a message about getting people to move back to Main Street America," said one judge. That message, plus bold design and attention to detail, is what won this bank-turned-private-residence the Builder's Choice Project of the Year award.

"I have always been interested in adaptive re-use projects," the owner notes, "and was looking for a nonresidential building to remodel into a home. It could have been an old firehouse—anything really." When a Realtor told him he had the perfect building, it turned out to be an historic, circa-1910 bank building located in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol. "The building had become an eyesore in an otherwise residential neighborhood," says the owner. "It had been vacant for several years prior to my acquisition, and was covered with graffiti." The renovation construction began with the neighbors' full support. "I think they were fearful it might be turned into a restaurant or maybe a 7-Eleven," he says.





FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

Cleanup was the first order of business. Although the 1,600-square-foot building appeared dilapidated, structurally it was sound and architecturally quite beautiful. "We pressure-washed to remove the old layers of paint and rust, and to restore the original limestone exterior cornice work and walls," says Tom Glass, the renovation contractor. "As for the interior, we replaced about 50 percent of the moulding and replastered virtually the whole building."

The architect designed a steel mezzanine above the kitchen to house the owner's study (large photo, page 88). The floor is made of 16-gauge perforated steel and is supported by two C-beams epoxy bolted into the masonry walls. "We knew we wanted a transparent material so we wouldn't lose the impact of the 20-foot ceilings," says architect Michael Hauptman. The one regret shared by all who worked on the job is that the perforated steel is not a thicker gauge. As Hauptman puts it, "When you first walk on the floor you feel a little unstable, but after a while you get used to it."

Stability was not a problem for Tom Glass. His greatest challenges occurred with objects that were too heavy, not too



Photos: Barry Halbin

light. "Moving the 3,500-pound safe door outside when the ground was covered with ice was extremely difficult," says Glass. The soapstone countertops, which the client selected for their durability and beauty, also posed an unforeseen difficulty. Not only were they extremely heavy, but Glass had to sand and oil them once they were in place. "We had to apply about four or five coats of mineral oil to get the desired finish," he recalls.

Even the professional relationships associated with this project were winners. "It was an entirely pleasurable experience. I was almost sad when it was finished," says the owner. "Everyone went out of their way to help each other." Says Hauptman, "I would love to work with either of them [the owner and Glass] again. It is rare that the builder, client, and architect get along as well as we did."

Overall, the judges liked the combination of the neoclassical exterior and the modernist interior. "The renovation took a good old building and made it into a great new building—with a history," said one judge. Another said, "Now every time I walk into a bank I am going to ask where the master bedroom is."

Costs were \$250,000 for the property, \$310,000 for the renovation, and \$60,000 for the landscaping.—C.B.



BEFORE

## WINNING IDEAS

- New entrance placement, on the side of the house, avoids the problem of walking directly into a room.

- The architect and builder retained original mouldings and window openings where possible.

- Wiring for the home is in conduits that run along cutouts in the brick wall.

- Frosted glass, like that used in the front door and shower enclosure, is a good way to let light through without sacrificing privacy.

- A drywall partition separates the dining room and kitchen without closing off either one and adds cabinet space to the kitchen.

- The custom cherry cabinets in the kitchen, bathrooms, and bedrooms give the home uniformity.

- The custom kitchen sink is made of the same polished soapstone as the countertops.

- The built-ins in the upstairs study are made of the same perforated steel as the mezzanine floor.

- The bank's night deposit box now serves as the home's mailbox.