

## Sponsor OF THE MONTH

### Place architecture: design

*When local architect, Laurie Stubb, gets a heating-oil delivery and the price tops \$4 per gallon, she is reminded of challenges vastly different from those that most of us confront as we simply try to figure out how to pay for the ever-escalating cost of energy.*

The renovations, additions, and new homes that are Laurie's specialty increasingly must incorporate creative design and sustainable products and materials into structures and spaces that address energy costs in environmentally sensitive ways. Equally as important, the design must preserve the essential character of the existing structures and attend to the way families live today.

Laurie, the principal of Place architecture: design, faced similar challenges as she and her husband, an architect for a large commercial firm in Baltimore, renovated their own home for themselves and their two daughters. The renovation included, among other changes, insulation of the exterior walls, replacement of existing windows with double-paned glass, and an upgrade of the mechanical HVAC system with energy-efficient equipment. These changes have lowered energy costs by fortifying the building envelope and reducing the volume of infiltrating air that has to be heated or cooled.

The transition from the old to the new takes the classic notion of design under constraint to new levels, as the architect balances a number of critical factors throughout the planning and execution of a renovation or addition. Homeowner and architect work as a team to define the scope of the project. Are we simply adding a few new touches to the kitchen or are we renovating the space? Does the proposed scope make sense given the nature of the existing structure? Do we have products and materials at our disposal that will meet our needs, and is the proposed scope of the project realistic given the budget we have to work with?

"Families live differently now than they did when many of



the older homes in the Baltimore area were built," says Stubb. "Homes with separate cooking and dining areas, for example, are not conducive to the modern lifestyle where families want to move more easily between the living spaces and the spaces often serve multiple purposes." With family time limited by busy schedules, it is important to the family's quality of life to have places in the home that they can enjoy together.

Laurie's central objective is always to harmonize traditional design with modern sensibilities while maintaining respect for the context of the setting. "A new addition," she says, "should look like it's always been there." This approach has served Laurie well when working in the Homeland area, where many of the houses reflect an early twentieth-century grandeur.

Laurie, who holds bachelors and masters degrees in architecture from the University of Maryland, has built her business on three principles:

- **Design.** Although design is personal, it also should be rational, and an architect brings to the design process a deep understanding of volume, scale, and proportion as they relate to the space in question. As the accompanying photos illustrate, Laurie strives to "integrate aesthetics and function, creating light-filled spaces that are fresh and timeless, all within the context of the project."
- **Relationships.** Getting to know the client is a very important aspect of the design process. "I listen carefully," says Stubb, "and establish a personal collaboration that incorporates the client's needs and wishes into design and construction."

• **Advocacy.** Laurie's designs ultimately end up in the hands of contractors who must turn the plans into reality, a process that can be rife with misunderstanding and frustration in the absence of clear communication and constant oversight. "I pride myself on personal attention from start to finish, and I serve as the client's advocate throughout the process," says Laurie. Her well-established working relationships with many of the local contractors help to ensure that her projects are executed with high quality—on time and within the allotted budget.

"I know I've succeeded," says Laurie, "when the homeowner walks into the new space and says, 'I love it; it's just what I imagined.'" For Laurie, that result means that she and the client have connected on the design and construction of a project that makes the home a natural extension of the existing structure and the client's personality.

Laurie is certified by the American Institute of Architects and the National Council of Architectural Registration Board. For more information, see [www.placearchitecture.com](http://www.placearchitecture.com).

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