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# Brush Park Beauty

AN 1882 DETROIT VICTORIAN GETS AN ULTRA-CHIC MAKEOVER WITH AN ACCENT ON HISTORIC FEATURES AND CONTEMPORARY UPGRADES  
 BY MEGAN SWOYER | PHOTOS BY BETH SINGER

When 30-year-old Michigan native Jake Schostak was looking for a home after having lived in Washington, D.C., and Chicago for a few years, he set his sights on Detroit and, specifically, Brush Park. In what has long been considered one of Detroit's most iconic neighborhoods, Schostak entered a bidding war on a 1,700-square-foot condominium within a classic 1882 Victorian mansion. It was in need of a few changes.

"Jake told me that he has a lifetime to live in the suburbs, so he wanted to live in Detroit," says his mother, Elise Schostak.

When the condominium became his, the busy Schostak — who lives with fiancée Shelby Timmis and works for his family in the restaurant business — relied on his mother's passion for interior design and architecture. "He works crazy business hours," says Elise, a graphic designer, who was willing to jump in. The first call the trio made was to award-winning architect Glenda Meads, who had done a renovation and addition at the home of one of Elise's friends. Together, the Schostaks, Timmis, and Meads reviewed the challenges.

"(The building) had been turned into four condos and renovated around 2004, but it was very dark, with brown trim, caramel and orangey walls, and a not-so-great layout," Meads recalls.

The condo's floor plan was broken up, and the master bedroom and bathroom were behind the kitchen. "It was very closed-in and needed to be opened up," Meads says. Along with the skills of Clawson-based Kastler Construction Inc.



## OLD MEETS NEW

Both pages: The front doors of the condominium are the original doors. They lead into what the homeowner calls the "parlor." A Sputnik-style chandelier, a plush settee, a print over the fireplace by Kelly Reemsten (from the David Klein Gallery), and the desk made by the owners of local furniture company Alex Drew & No One create a stylish bent. The fireplace was given a face-lift with new built-ins. The crown molding in this space was retained, but a new clean-simple crown was added around the entire opened-up area to echo the original in front. The bay window looks out to City Modern, an in-progress development.

and its Visionary Cabinetry and Design arm, the team transformed the home into a chic, airy, light-filled residence. "I love doing this kind of modern reinvention of existing vintage architecture," Meads says.

Jake and Timmis weighed in regularly to give their approval on different ideas. "I would scout items at, say, Herald Wholesale, and narrow things down for (them), and then Jake and Shelby would make final selections," Elise says. "He has very specific and sophisticated taste."

Located across the street from City Modern, a mixed-use, in-the-works development that integrates modern design and urban living, Jake's

home gives a nod to history (the team restored some stunning accents) and contemporary style.

If the original owner of the mansion, banker Frederick Butler, could see the condominium today, he'd likely be quite pleased, thanks to the team's goal of retaining as much of the original beauty as possible. Exposed old brick plays a starring role in various spaces, and the original parquet floor shares space with a new parquet floor that was laid to echo the historic pattern.

"The home is historically designated, so we had to get City of Detroit Historic District approval for an exterior change that we made, which was to create a center window in the lower level bay



**CABINET COUTURE**

Interior walls were removed to create one open space. Cabinetry is from Clawson-based Kastler Construction Inc. and its Visionary Cabinetry and Design arm. The homeowner's mother created the art near the dining table.

**BEAUTY IN THE DETAILS**

Architect Glenda Meads designed the powder room as a "box" within the space, where the walls don't meet the ceiling. She wanted the whole first floor to be open from front to back, so the powder room is "floating, minimizing its presence," she says. In the bar area, designed/installed by Kastler Construction Inc. and its Visionary Cabinetry division, a painting by Melinda Borysevich draws the eye.



(that's) operable for bedroom egress code," Meads explains. "It fits with the area."

Brush Park was developed, beginning in the 1850s, as an upscale neighborhood with dozens of Victorian mansions. Because of its elegant architecture, the neighborhood was nicknamed "Little Paris."

The main-level changes included removing all interior walls to create one large, open space. The team also repainted the entire home (the original doors were once painted maroon), added closets, created a "floating" powder room (a "box" within the space, Meads says) where the walls don't meet the ceiling, turned an old bedroom on the first floor into an open and airy great room, re-exposed original interior brick, overhauled the kitchen, installed a bar and high-end wine storage areas, updated the stairway to the lower level with a modern

glass railing, and installed new crown molding. Through the back door is a charming deck space with comfortable furnishings, a grill, and a fire pit.

Lower-level changes included updating an existing bedroom and tucking a tiny bath into a former closet, adding storage space beneath the stairway, and making the front room into a new master bedroom, which included a complete re-do of the downstairs bath (with stackable laundry) and turning a charming brick alcove into the master closet.

"Everything got loved," Elise says. Adds Jake: "Anything original was saved. We wanted to renovate the home for modern living but make sure the integrity of the Victorian features remained."

Meads says the oversize pocket doors between the front parlor and main space were retained for their historic significance, and the front fireplace



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— GLENDA MEADS

surround was given a face-lift with new built-ins. “The crown molding in the front area was also retained, but a new, clean-simple crown was added around the entire opened-up area to echo the original in front,” she says.

“It was important to make it contemporary but not so stark that it’s uncomfortable to live in,” Jake adds. “The home is cozy, and I’m proud of that.” Much of the coziness comes in the way of art, as the open and light-filled space called for great accent pieces. One of the biggest works came straight from Italy — along with the artist!

“Jake wanted something dramatic on the wall above the staircase, so we found a piece by Melinda Borysevicz ([saatchiart.com](http://saatchiart.com)),” Elise says. “She’s an American artist living in Italy and she actually came here, with the painting we chose, while visiting the U.S. with her architect boyfriend. They

took the art off the frame, restretched it, and hung it. It was a great experience.” Another intriguing work is by Shepard Fairey from Detroit’s Library Street Collective. Still another piece, made of wood and bright paint colors, was made by Elise. The homeowners also have a piece by Detroit artist/rapper Sheffy. Beyond the renovation, one of Jake’s favorite things about the home is its location. “It’s a commutable walk to great neighborhoods like the central business district and Midtown,” he says. “We walk to Grey Ghost and Bakersfield all the time. Walking to Eastern Market is a great benefit.”

“He’s got a front row seat to the city,” Elise adds. No doubt, Shelby and Jake’s friends like that. “We have a great patio and a big bar,” Jake says. “The house was designed to entertain, and the location is close to all the action. It’s always fun to host!” ■

**VICTORIAN ROOTS**

The home was originally built for banker Frederick Butler. Brush Park was developed beginning in the 1850s, as an upscale neighborhood with dozens of Victorian mansions like this one. Because of the elegant architecture, the neighborhood was nicknamed “Little Paris.” At one point, the mansion was made into four condominiums, one of which Jake Schostak and Shelby Timmis, shown below, call home (the lower right quadrant).



**A WELCOMING HOME**

The family room, just off the kitchen, was once a closed-in master bedroom, but with walls removed, the space is now open. The artwork in the black frame is by southern artist Shepard Fairey and is from Detroit’s Library Street Collective. The dimensional cube art on the wall was created by the homeowner. The master bedroom, once on the first floor, is now located in the lower level and features grays, blacks, golds, and lots of texture. Just out the back door, off the family room, awaits a fun outdoor entertaining space.

