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See how this 1920s house in West Graceland grew

The home has been expanded and updated a few times since the current owners bought it 16 years ago, all the while paying homage to its original charm. Take a photo tour.

DENNIS RODKIN  

VHT Studios

Before It Hits The Market: The home has been expanded and updated a few times since the current owners bought it 16 years ago, all the while paying homage to its original charm. Take a photo tour.

In the past 16 years, this American foursquare in Graceland West has gained new space in the kitchen, off the back and up top, all building on its original 1920s charm.

Windows in the old spaces, seen at left in the photo above, have direct descendants in the new spaces, at right. Ceiling beams from the 2010s complement those that have been in the house since the start. In the added-on master suite, a window-enclosed sitting area facing the back of the lot looks a lot like an original porch on the street-front facade.

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“Houses have souls, and we’ve tried to be good stewards of the soul of this house,” said Lynne Kiesling, who bought the house on Hutchinson Street in 2004 with her husband,

Matthew Coffey.

They are essentially only the second owners of the house, as it was handed down through a single family from the time it was built, around 1925, until they bought it. They paid \$630,000 for the house, before making two sizable additions and many updates.

Coffey and Kiesling were drawn to Graceland West, part of Lakeview, she said, because of the rows of charming 1920s homes in a quiet setting and the ease of transportation around the area, just west of historic Graceland Cemetery. During this spring of the stay-at-home order, they've found another reason to like the area: "We have a beautiful place right nearby to go for a walk when we need to get out of the house but not get too close to other people," she said, referring to the cemetery's park-like setting of trees, ponds and sculpture.

Planning to downsize out of the four-bedroom, 3,600-square-foot house, the couple hopes to have it on the market April 8, unless the stay-at-home order is extended. The listing agent is Phyllis Stellato and the asking price is \$1.15 million.

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The house is part of an ensemble of homes on the block all built around the same time, said Kiesling, an economist. (Coffey is in computer systems.) As the area turned from celery farms to a residential district, "a single developer built the houses on this block, so while each one is different, they all have the same setback from the sidewalk, the same sort of porch. It's an early 20th century aesthetic, and it's charming."

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A benefit of the house staying in one family for its first eight decades is that the original wood trim hadn't been painted over, Kiesling said. The fireplace with flanking bookcases is a standard of the era, but the mantel has an unusual flourish: three tiers beneath a niche. Kiesling said she's seen similar looks in articles on historical bungalows, but never spotted one like this in real life. The doors at left open to an enclosed porch.

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The exterior windows on the sunporch and elsewhere in the house have been replaced with modern energy-saving UV-coated glass. The couple replaced an out-of-character acoustical tile ceiling with period-appropriate beadboard, which matches what's on the eaves outside the house.

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The dining room, in the original part of the house, flows into the family room, in a two-story addition off the back of the house. The architects of the addition, Evanston-based Morgante Wilson, marked the transition from old to new sections with vertical cabinets beneath a barrel-vaulted ceiling, seen at the top of this story.

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The cabinets are a contemporary take on the wood pillars found in some houses of this one's vintage. Their leaded glass doors evoke the house's original stained-glass windows. In the family room, ceiling beams and square windows evoke their predecessors in the old part of the house, and the farthest rear set of windows are in a direct line from those on the front porch.

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There were also disadvantages to the house staying in one family for a long time. Among them: the kitchen was long overdue for updating, if only to bring the refrigerator in off the back porch. Morgante Wilson designed a space that opens into both the dining room and the family room, and has an inviting banquette at the rear, beneath a set of windows.

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Hard as it may be to believe, the master bedroom is in a 2008 addition, though with its window-wrapped porch, arched doorway and ceiling beams it does a good impersonation of a 1920s look that is common all over Chicago.

Inspired by the use of artisanal tile in the Arts & Crafts movement, Kiesling selected a mix for the master bath shower that suggests water and rock. The shower windows and tall cabinet demonstrate Morgante Wilson's "attention to all the details," she said.

In 2012, Morgante Wilson came back to turn a cramped, poorly insulated attic into this office for Kiesling. Spray foam insulation is now behind the walls and ceiling, and built-in bookcases and ceiling beams finish the room in a look that suits the home's original vintage.

While Kiesling uses the attic room as an office, this full bathroom is next door, so the floor could be used as a fourth bedroom, added to the three on the second floor.

Kiesling's garden style is in keeping with the Arts & Crafts aesthetic that infuses the house. A bluestone terrace and a pergola are, in warm weather, surrounded by blooming perennials. The roll-up door on the garage, which makes moving garden furniture and grills so much easier, was a leftover from construction of the addition on the house: the only way to get construction equipment and supplies in from the alley was through the garage. The lot, 30 by 121 feet, is about 15 percent larger than the standard 25-by-125 Chicago lot.

Inline Play

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