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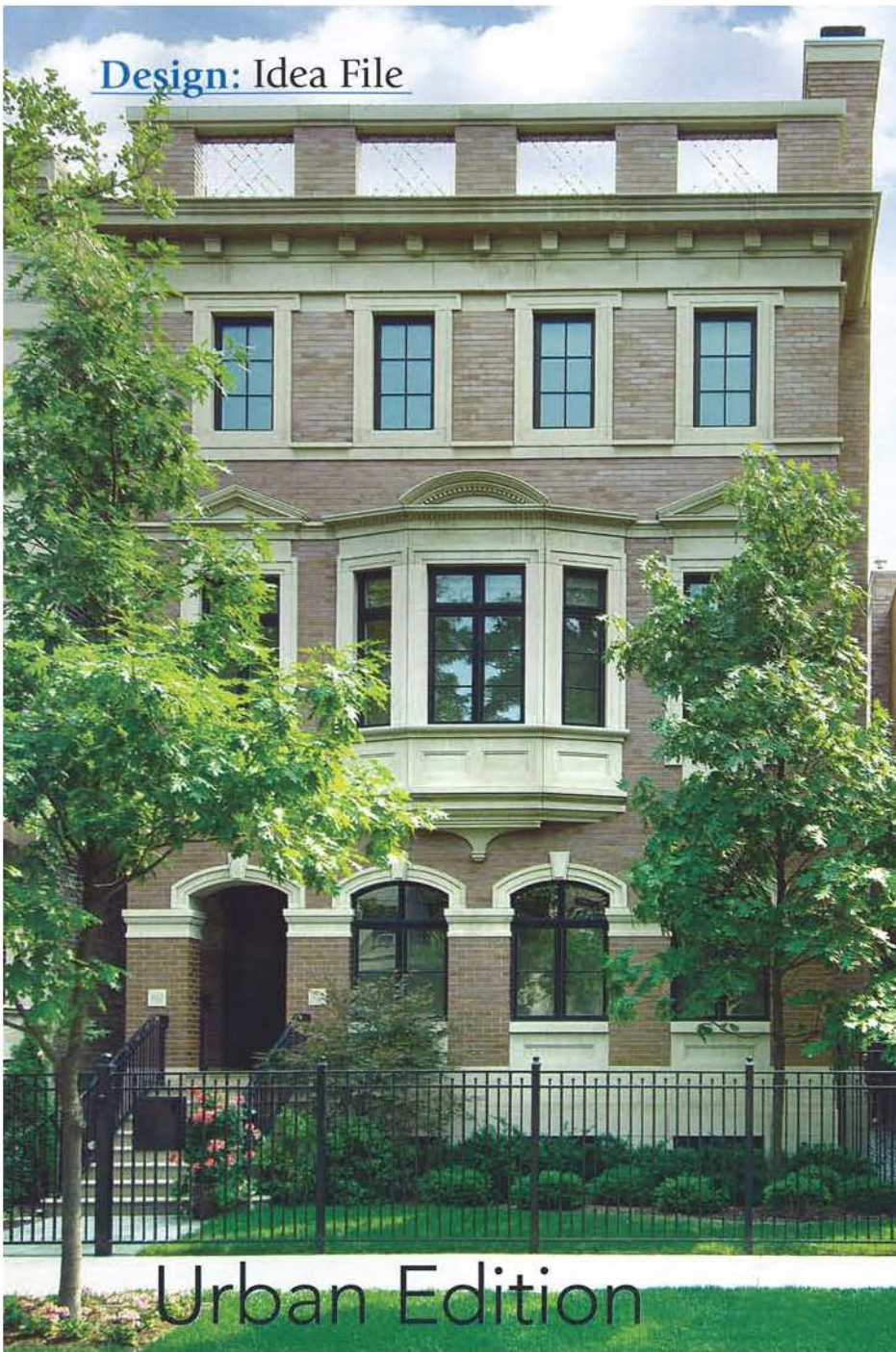
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Urban Edition



This luxury home in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood shows a tight footprint doesn't have to compromise living space.

BY ANN MATESI, SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Judging from its elegant brick exterior and hand-cut limestone trim, this Beaux-Arts belle in one of Chicago's most desirable neighborhoods could easily be mistaken for one of the city's historic 100-year-old mansions. But in reality

it's every bit a modern beauty.

The 7,600-square-foot home features four floors of living space: six bedrooms; formal living and dining rooms; a private library; a gourmet kitchen; a breakfast nook; separate media and recreation rooms; an envi-

Although his buyers are drawn to city life for its vibrant lifestyle, builder Erick Grahn says they want their homes to offer suburban amenities such as traditional architecture, bright open living areas, gourmet kitchens with space for entertaining, lots of bedrooms and plenty of parking.

ronment-controlled wine cellar; an enclosed rooftop penthouse with its own wet bar; plus more than 3,000 square feet of outdoor entertaining space.

That's a lot of living to pack into a single-family home on an urban infill lot, but for builder Erick Grahn, vice president of Chicago-based GVP Development, these are the kinds of amenities his target market of sophisticated city-dwellers look for in an upscale home.

"They really want all the same amenities associated with a luxury suburban home," he says, "including the outdoor space."

Grahn, who co-founded GVP Development in 1990 with his father, Marvin, and brother, Peter, established their business by restoring apartment buildings and historic greystones homes that continue to be treasured for their distinctive limestone facades.

In Chicago, they were originally built in a wide ring around downtown during the late 1800s through the early 1900s.

Today, the firm annually builds an average of four \$3 million-plus, single-family custom and spec residences, as well as six condominium projects, in some of the city's most

upscale north side neighborhoods, including Lakeview, where this home is located, and Lincoln Park.

Bordered on their eastern edge by Lake Michigan, the recreational and cultural opportunities these communities offer to residents and newcomers, as well as their proximity to the city's employment centers, have made both very popular with new home

buyers who are "moving back into the city"—a trend that really took hold in Chicago's northern neighborhoods in the early 1980s, says Grahn.

"The city of Chicago is very pro-growth when it comes to new residential development," says the builder. "Because of this there has been a real revival of the inner-city neighborhoods. It started on the north, but now you really see it all spreading throughout the west and south sides as well."

Community Character

These days, it is the city's older, stick-frame homes, which have reached the end of their usable lives, that provide builders with the most promising opportunities for finding available land for new development, says Grahn. "There's usually not much left of them worth saving, so in most cases they are removed rather than rehabbed."



Every bit of outdoor space is put to use in this urban home; even the garage rooftop functions as a conventional patio.

A tear-down site, however, does not give a builder carte blanche to build a brand new home that is so grand it virtually dominates the existing streetscape, he warns: "Urban infill projects are most successful when they complement rather than disrupt the existing social and economic fabric of the neighborhood where they are located."

Although standard zoning regula-

tions for single-family residential development are in place on a city-wide basis, development in the individual neighborhoods is governed by zoning sub-categories that have been established to protect the character and density of the community. The city's historical commission, neighborhood planning groups and community leaders maintain a strong say-so in what kind of new development occurs within their boundaries.

The most important thing, says Grahn, is that when you are building a new home on an infill site in an existing neighborhood you have to make sure the home fits well architecturally.

Because the project's neighborhood already had several period three- and four-story apartment buildings, the design goal for this spec-built home was to have the same general aesthetic without being monotonous.

"Just like in the suburbs, high-end residential buyers in the city want to be able to differentiate themselves from each other through the homes they live in," says Grahn. "But because we are working with standard-size city lots in very tight conditions in almost every case, zoning regulations that determine such things as setbacks and building heights also severely restrict your opportunities when it comes to creating variety in what you build on an infill lot. If you are not careful, there is a danger that all of the homes on the block can begin to look alike."

This is where working with the right architect becomes absolutely critical, he says.

"For infill projects, a builder really needs a skilled architect who can do a good job of putting refinements on the exterior façade of the house to get away from repetition," says architect Jeff Goulette, principal with Sullivan Goulette & Wilson, which designed this home. "For those who aren't afraid to

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depart from the same path that everyone else is going down, urban infill projects can be a great opportunity to set themselves apart from their competition."

Both traditional and modern architecture have their place for infill residential development, says Goulette. "The direction that a project takes in terms of its style depends not only on who the builder's intended buyer is,

but also on the fabric of the community where it is going to be built."

The Exterior Envelope

"A standard city lot in Chicago measures 25 feet by 125 feet," says Goulette. "So right from the start of the design process you are working under very restrictive circumstances. You definitely do not have the same degree of

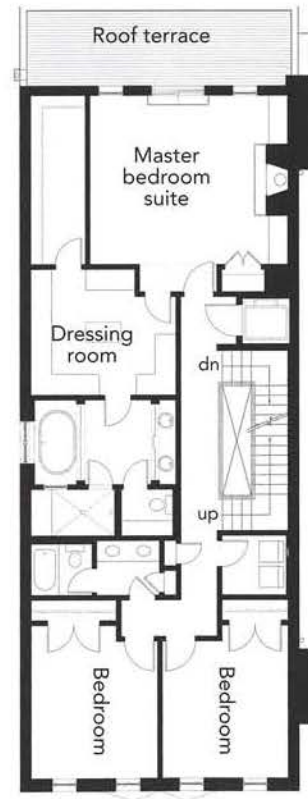
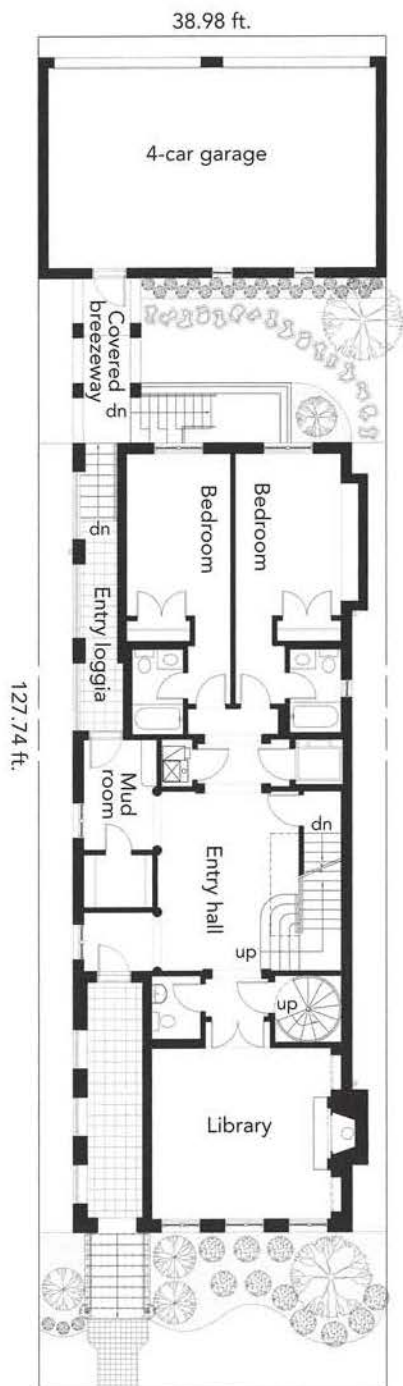
freedom that you have in a suburban setting where you may be able to rotate a home on the building site in order to bring in sunlight or views."

As a result, the challenge when designing a single-family home on an urban infill lot is to address its exterior envelope and, working within the same constraints as neighboring homes, develop a plan that makes it look unique, says the architect.

"The reality is that there is tremendous room for experimentation within traditional vernacular." To encourage this, the architectural firm maintains a large library of historical architecture reference books, and employees are encouraged to "dip into the work of past architectural masters" for inspiration.

Interior Space

"An infill site, particularly on Chicago's north side, can be a very, very expensive piece of property," says Grah. "Be-



cause of this we have to do everything we can to maximize usable indoor and outdoor living space for our clients."

Goulette developed the floor plans for the home using what he calls classical "piano nobile" organization. That means the main living spaces of the home — including the formal living and dining rooms, kitchen and great room — are on the second floor.

The advantage of this, he says, increases living space by keeping the foyer on the ground floor where it will not encroach into the valuable entertaining space upstairs.

The kitchen offers another example of how interior space was maximized because it visually connects to the family room and breakfast nook. A common design feature in suburban homes, it is rarely seen in urban infill homes, says Grahn.

"In the past, the kitchen in an urban home was almost treated as an after thought. But today this is where people spend 80 percent of their time when they are home. Because of this we wanted to avoid having this space feel cramped or dark."

Bringing more light into the interior of an urban infill home is always a challenge, Goulette says. To help, the architects use the front and rear elevation windows to open up the home.

"You definitely do have to deal with a much tighter confinement of the spaces in an urban location," agrees Laura Wallace, project manager for the architect. "It becomes all about the compression of the layout within the lot."

One advantage that this home had, she says, is the site's footprint. Because it sits on a 37-foot-wide building site, there were more opportunities to experiment with the arrangement of the interior spaces.

The home's entry level — a half-flight up from the street — features front and rear loggias, which connect at a grand central foyer. The adjoining

Scouting Sites Pays Off

Builder Erick Grahn lives in the same area where he builds homes, and this, he says, keeps him in touch with what works best for his clients in terms of location, style and amenities. It also allows him to identify properties that may be suitable for future projects.

"I'm not trying to re-invent the wheel here," he says. "What I do is keep tabs on the oldest house on the block on any given street. I also look for sites that are wider than a standard city lot."

These can be can be a goldmine, says the builder, in terms of increasing the opportunities for what you can build when it comes to a plan-

ning and building a single-family home in the city. Benefits include:

- Give the home a more stately appearance from the street
- Widen and shorten the home, which can increase yard space and parking opportunities
- Be more creative in the use and flexibility of interior space, including incorporating jogs into the floor plan
- Design for larger, brighter and grander interior rooms
- Increase the universality of a home by providing the space to include an elevator making the home more suitable for use by all ages

staircase is open all the way up to the roof, where a skylight creates an interior light well. The rest of this level features functional secondary spaces such as two guest suites, a library and a mud room.

"In the past, basements were not traditionally used for living space in city homes," says Grahn. Not so in this home where the basement includes an abundance of informal entertaining space as well as a separate guest suite.

The master suite occupies more than half of the home's third floor and has its own private deck that overlooks the rear courtyard.

Laundry rooms in the basement and on the third floor and an elevator make the home more accessible.

The home also features an alley-loaded detached garage with space for four cars. The roof structure of the garage itself was "beefed up" says the architect, to provide enough support for the roof itself to become a modified yard for the homeowner.

"We do all kinds of things on garage roofs to make them more functional for the homeowner these days," says

Goulette. This includes brick paver decking, fireplaces and even gardens and lawns. **CB**

SPEC-BUILT LUXURY RESIDENCE

Style of Home: Beaux Arts

Location: Chicago

Square Footage:

7,600 square feet

Estimated Market Value:

\$3.75 million

Architect/Residential Design: Sullivan

Goulette & Wilson, Chicago

Builder: GVP Development, Chicago

Interiors: Pauline Laner Interiors

Architect, Chicago

Products Used: APPLIANCES:

Viking, Sub-Zero, Miele; CABINETRY:

Wood-Mode; COUNTERTOPS: granite,

limestone, marble; PLUMBING FIX-

TURES: Rohl, Dornbracht; FIREPLACE:

Majestic; LIGHTING: Halo; DOORS:

Marvin; WINDOWS: Marvin; LOCKSETS:

Baldwin; EXTERIOR FINISH: brick,

limestone

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ECKERT ARCHITECTURAL