

New England HOME

Celebrating Fine Design, Architecture, and Building

Gather 'Round

*EMBRACE THE
SEASON IN STYLE*





Lighten Up!

A dark, traditional home gets a modern makeover fit for an active young family.

Text by Alyssa Bird

Photography by Jared Kuzia

The homeowners worked with designers Holly Gagne and Tina Sanchez and builder Carson True to transform a traditional residence into the stylish house of their dreams. Perhaps the most dramatic change is the interior millwork, which went from a dark mahogany to an airy white, as seen in the entry.

FACING PAGE: The hallway looking into the dining room is sheathed in a Phillip Jeffries wallpaper.



Throughout the home, Gagne and Sanchez created small gathering areas to make the residence's large scale feel more intimate. In the expansive living room, two separate sitting areas feature comfortable, streamlined furnishings upholstered in durable fabrics that are appropriate for the couple's two children. "We wanted them to have these smaller, cozy spaces where they can be together as a family," explains Sanchez.





RIGHT: A sectional from RH provides a comfortable lounging area on one side of the living room; the artwork is by Meighan Morrison. **LEFT:** On the opposite end of the living room, it's easy to see how much dark mahogany was in the home before Gagne and Sanchez stepped in with gallons of paint. No changes were necessary to the Calacatta gold fireplace surround; in the winter, the family likes to get cozy here and play games.



So often the best things come to those who aren't looking for them, and such was the case with Ashley and Josiah Lilly's residence in Newbury, Massachusetts. The couple hadn't been planning to leave their beloved riverfront home in Newburyport, but when Josiah—a realtor and Newbury native—noticed this listing come on the market, he knew it was too good to pass up.

Boasting triple the square footage and more outdoor space for their two children, dogs, and cats, it checked all the boxes for a young family. The only problem? "Ashley hated the house when we first saw it," he says with a laugh. "But we've done renovations before, so we knew we could take it from traditional to transitional to suit our taste."

And although the 8,600-square-foot residence—which was built in 2010—felt a bit dark and dated, thanks in large part to heavy mahogany paneling throughout, it also had a lot going for it. "When I toured the house with Ashley and Josiah, I thought it was a beautiful starting point

*“OUR GOAL WAS
TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO
THE HOME, MAKING
IT LIGHTER, BRIGHTER, AND
MORE CASUAL.”*

—INTERIOR DESIGNER HOLLY GAGNE



ABOVE: The most extensive work was done in the kitchen, where painted custom cabinets, durable quartzite countertops, and walnut flooring replaced dark cabinetry and marble flooring. Barstools from Lawson-Fenning and pendants from The Urban Electric Co. outfit the island. **LEFT:** An adjacent pantry was transformed into a multipurpose space containing a built-in coffee nook and two desk areas.

with great craftsmanship,” says builder Carson True, a childhood acquaintance of Ashley’s who has collaborated with the couple on previous projects. “It was clear, however, that there would need to be changes made for them to feel comfortable in the house.”

At True’s suggestion, the homeowners met with interior designer Holly Gagne. “We knew immediately that we wanted to work with her,” says Ashley, a financial

tech consultant who also grew up in the area. “She was kind, had an amazing vibe, and seemed to get us right away.” Gagne, along with her associate Tina Sanchez, even visited the Lilly’s Newburyport house to get a better handle on her clients’ wants and needs. “It was helpful to see what they liked so we could translate that into their new home,” says Gagne, adding that the new residence had “great bones, charm, and character,

but felt too formal for a young family. Our goal was to breathe new life into the home, making it lighter, brighter, and more casual.”

Among the list of mandates was installing a new kitchen (the mahogany cabinetry and earth-tone marble flooring didn’t speak to the homeowners’ aesthetic), transforming the pantry into a multiuse space with two desks, retaining the reddish-toned wood floors to bring



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Says Gagne of the frequently used sunroom: "This room didn't have a clear purpose in the beginning, but now it's the perfect complement to the kitchen and a great place to unwind." In the primary bedroom, the chandelier, bed, chair, and rug are from RH, the homeowner's favorite store. The primary bath features wallpaper from Serena & Lily.

out their natural walnut color, addressing the mahogany paneling and trim, changing out all lighting and hardware, and painting the entire house. "There was a solid four months of painting alone," notes Sanchez. "We discussed removing the mahogany trim altogether, but painting it white actually makes it pop."

With just about every surface refreshed, Gagne and Sanchez could begin furnishing the family-friendly home, incorporating some of the couple's existing items along with new contemporary pieces upholstered in durable performance fabrics. "They have an active lifestyle with kids and pets, but they also appreciate quality and enjoy an elevated sense of style," explains Sanchez. "We balanced the strong, rich woods with airy neutrals, including textured fabrics in white, taupe, cream, and gray."

And now that the transformation is complete, Ashley couldn't be happier. "The end result truly fosters our lifestyle," she says. "It went from dark and heavy to light, casual, and elegant."

EDITOR'S NOTE: For details, see Resources.



INTERIOR DESIGN: Holly Gagne, Tina Sanchez, Holly Gagne Interior Design
RENOVATION BUILDER: Carson True, The True Company
ARCHITECTURE: Benjamin Nutter, Rick Bernard, Benjamin Nutter Architects