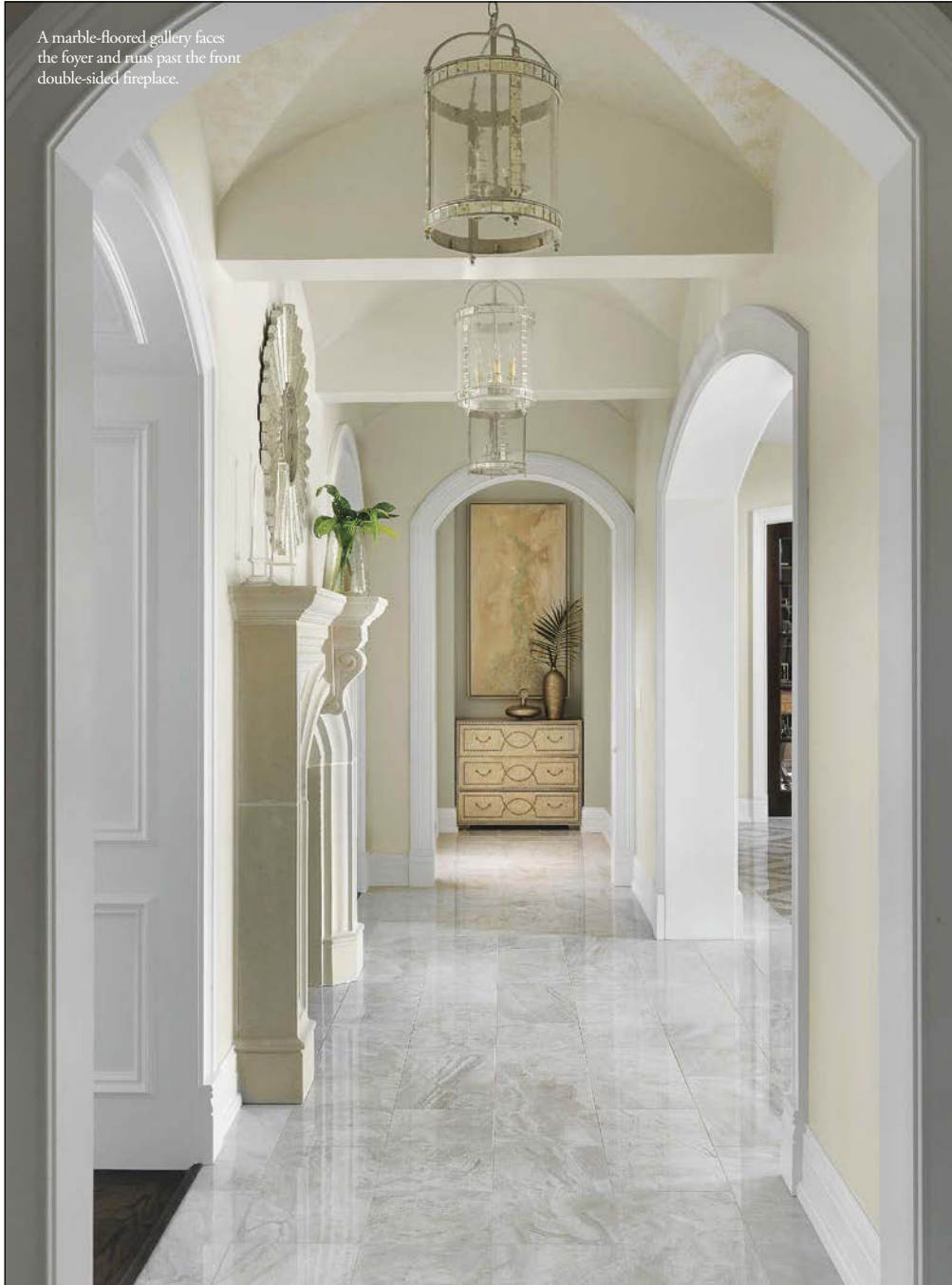


SOPHISTICATED LIVING

{St. Louis' Finest}



A marble-floored gallery faces the foyer and runs past the front double-sided fireplace.



A CHANGE OF PLANS

Written by Christy Marshall / Photography by Alise O'Brien

Barb and Bill Dowling were happily ensconced in the Oakville abode where they had raised their son and daughter. Now enjoying their retirement, they had no notions of moving out of South County.

But on one fateful December night, Barb drove over to Frontenac to attend a Christmas party, hosted by one member of her tennis group. The street was pitch dark; her friend's house was a stunner. Days later, she and Bill were in the same area and she suggested they drive by so he could see it for himself.

On the same lane, they spied two lots with for sale signs staked in the front lawns.

"[Bill] said we ought to call just for fun to see what they are asking," Barb recalls. "'Just for fun' turned into 'Maybe we should do this.' We do a lot of babysitting and we would be closer to the kids. We started talking about it and it got real."

"It is truly our dream house," she adds. "It is everything we could possibly want in a home. We thought we were set where we were. A lot of our friends thought we were crazy for upsizing."





To add interest, Srote added box beams to the ceiling. The first plans neglected to add a window over the sink. The final plan added the window and made the garage detached.



"Another design element was the addition of the wet bar that connects to the grand salon and kitchen/hearth room," Srote says. "That addition allows for smooth flow when they are hosting parties."



But then again, there are probably people who think working shifts at McDonald's isn't an ideal route to corporate success. Bill Dowling has proved them wrong. When he was 16 years old, he went to work at the fast food chain earning \$1 an hour. Ultimately, he worked to put himself through Saint Louis University. Then he stayed with the restaurant giant, working his way up the corporate ladder to management. He even graduated from Hamburger U. After a number of years, he decided to switch over to the distribution side, first with PFD Supply, a subsidiary of Prairie Farms Dairy. Eventually he bought the division devoted exclusively to McDonald's distribution, renamed it Gateway Distribution, and then sold it five years ago.

An interior designer, Laurie Dowling LeBoeuf inherited her parents' work ethic. When they decided to build a new house, she respectfully declined the job. Already laboring 50-to-60 hours a week at Spellman Brady & Company, she knew she couldn't add

another major project to her workload. She recommended Emily Castle of Castle Design.

"They signed a contract with her," LeBoeuf says. "I attended a few meetings and was doing some things, like the lighting. Then Emily called me up and asked me to come in for an interview."

Castle offered LeBoeuf a position and now she is on staff at the firm. Her first assignment was, predictably, her parents' brand-new 9,000-square-foot house.

"There was some collaboration but [Castle] pretty much said, 'Here you go,'" LeBoeuf says. "I hit the ground running. It was so different from my background in hospitality and senior living design. There was a learning curve, which was mostly learning the players in town in residential design."



Another item on Barb's wish list was window seats. The rug and sectional came from KDR.

Robert Srote of Schaub & Srote Architects designed the house; St. Albans Construction built it. “One of the early requests was to have a turret on the front elevation,” Srote says.

The Dowlings had a list of dos and don’ts that started with no white (Barb, a now-retired registered nurse, says she spent too many hours in operating rooms to enjoy the sterility of white walls), traditional architectural features (i.e. groin vaults, boxed ceilings, exposed beams), abundant storage, and a smattering of hidden rooms. Also, they did not want to see directly through the house from the front door. They don’t. The foyer faces a double-sided fireplace with a soaring staircase off to the right.

“There is so much interest at every angle,” LeBoeuf says. “You look straight and you see the fireplace, you turn and you see

the stairwell.” To the right and left runs a hallway or gallery with vaulted ceilings.

The design scheme pairs traditional architectural features with a more modern, clean-lined transitional look. The color palette in the house stems from the Diana Royale marble that snagged Barb’s eye—and heart.

The marble starts in the entry where LeBoeuf drew an intricate design for the floor—a design that required 900 cuts of marble. She handed the assignment to tile cutter, Piero Vito. His cousin trekked to St. Louis from Italy to help complete the job.

On the other side of the fireplace stands the grand salon, an open-air take on the traditional living room. The room leads on to the kitchen and hearth room, the area where, like most families, the Dowlings spend nearly all their time.



The bedroom is a sanctuary of serenity. "There is an octagonal sitting room off the master bedroom that overlooks the pool in the backyard," Srote notes as yet another interesting architectural element in the house.





"Barb's a storage nut," LeBoeuf says.
"And I fill it up," Barb replies, laughing.



"A lot of the palette came from the marble in the front," LeBoeuf says.



A splash of gold and sparkle,
LeBoeuf notes that the vanity
comes from Cole & Co.



Designed by New Space, the
walk-in closet has a place for
everything. The Dowlings
love stone countertops so
here they used Blanc du
Blanc suede granite.



Taking note of the Dowlings' Irish heritage, LeBoeuf added such native touches as Celtic knots and shamrocks carved into the wood of the bar. Not seen is a playroom for their granddaughter, Charlotte. It's hidden behind a secret door.

"I wanted a big open kitchen so when we have people over, we can all be around the same area," Barb says. "I wanted a big island with lots of space in between because no matter what happens, everyone is always hanging around the island."

Barb has a strong yen for lots of storage spaces and a deep affection for hidden spaces. The double full-length cabinet doors open into a walk-in pantry. The cabinetry came from Karr Bick Kitchen and Bath. Barb also loves nail heads, as seen on the barstools, on the sectional in the hearth room, and even the bed in the master bedroom.

"Overall, we carried the champagne tones throughout," LeBoeuf says. "A lot of the neutrals were very, very similar." However, splashes of color crop up throughout. "The salon has a pop of the turquoise, the dining room is a little more

subdued with the blue; the hearth room and kitchen are very monochromatic," she adds.

With the exception of a sectional reused in the lower level, the Dowlings bought everything brand new. There was one basic element LeBoeuf deemed worth a significant investment.

"Lighting was really important," she says. "That was one element that really needed to be special. We shopped all over. Most of the lighting came from Wilson [Lighting], Metro [Lighting] but a lot of the lighting is from Visual Comfort [Lighting]."

The result of the collaboration of LeBoeuf/Castle/Srote/Dowlings is, to put it simply, a dream house. "It is very different from the house I grew up in but it still feels like them," LeBoeuf says. And if it weren't for a holiday soirée hosted by a friend, the Dowlings would still be residing on the south side of the city. **sl**