



MATT POWERS CUSTOM HOMES & RENOVATIONS  
 MattPowersCustomHomes.com  
 713.787.6709

(left) The “New” open plan utilized the unused formal dining room to expand and open the kitchen and create a butler’s pantry.

(below: upper, middle) This “New” old house’s renovated professional kitchen has every amenity of a high-end custom home kitchen including a Wolfe oven, 2 Kohler sinks, seeded and antique bubble glass, granite countertops, and the new butler’s pantry.

(lower) Beautiful “New” master retreat addition keeps the vintage look, enlarged the master bedroom, added a wonderful walk-in closet, and spa-like master bathroom.



# The “New” Old Home



By Matt Powers  
 Matt Powers Custom Homes & Renovations  
 Photography Courtesy of MPCH&R



**E**AR DOWN OR REMODEL? AS A CUSTOM builder, that also specializes in renovations throughout the Houston area, this is a question that I face daily. For many of our clients in the last decade with property in Houston’s older subdivisions the answer was often a foregone conclusion. The existing home was already torn down, or arrangements were quickly being made for its removal and construction of a new larger home. What I would like to share with you today is the story of a client that took a different path. Together we embarked on an adventure to build a “new” old home.

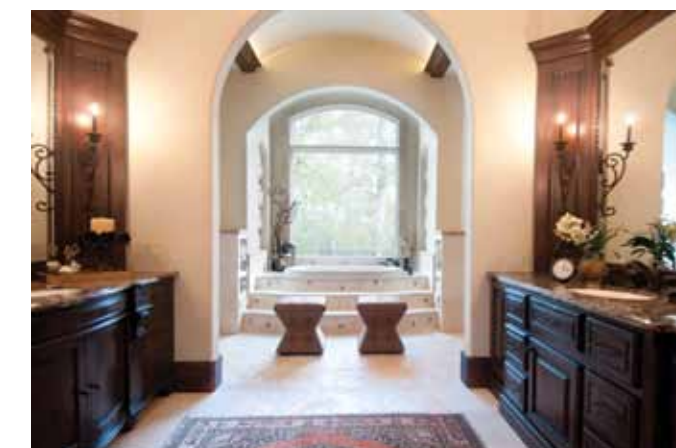


**(above)** This 2012 NARI Coty Interior Specialty award winning renovation features a quartzite-ledge finished wall with an inset double-sided arched masonry fireplace and custom built fully integrated advanced technology entertainment center.

In the spring of 2010, our client was the victim of one our unusually heavy spring rains. Due to some local infrastructure construction, and the sheer amount of rainfall, they were greeted with significant flooding in their 49-year-old Memorial one-story home. After days of clean up and carpet removal and numerous meetings with insurance adjustors, they gave us a call to discuss building a new home on their Memorial property. The thought of building a new home had been in their future plans, but the storm had accelerated the time frame.

As we do with all clients, we met several times to view their current home and discuss what would be important to them in a new home. They loved the idea of improved energy efficiency, environmentally responsible green construction, and the many other features and benefits of a new home. However, as we initiated the planning process we also discovered that they really liked their old home and only needed a little more space in living areas.

Somewhere in the process we came up with the idea of creating a “new” old home. Meetings with architectural designers and energy efficiency experts confirmed that the home they loved could be renovated to rival any new home in both energy efficiency and green construction.



**(upper right)** The client’s wish of having a personal space within this home to relax and begin each morning with serenity and functionality that truly epitomizes the word “retreat”.

**(lower right)** This stately custom built grand entrance blends Oklahoma stone and old world stucco, forged copper bonnets and gutters, graced with a courtyard fountain.





**(above)** Beneath these beautiful arches, you are welcomed by the warmth of this sun filled gallery and dining room. No interior detail can escape the eye.

**(upper right)** This staircase graces the entry of this beautiful Georgian home.



As a custom homebuilder, we have built many new homes over the years that have attained both Energy Star and green certification. However, this was the first time we had undertaken a renovation project seeking certification for green status. Without the unwavering commitment of the homeowner and the dedication of an experienced team, this project likely would not have reached the lofty goals it attained. Dewey Hennessee of Matt Powers Custom Homes & Renovations was joined by Bryan Kirpatrick, the architectural designer, and Clayton Farmer, certified energy consultant, to form the team that had to play critical roles in both research and providing expertise throughout the design and construction process.

Under the Greater Houston Builder's Association's (GHB) new program Green Built Gulf Coast (GBGC), the renovated home needed to show a reduction in both energy consumption and water usage by more than 50% from its previous level. The program is specifically designed for homes along the Texas Gulf Coast that are subject to our intense heat and humidity. To achieve the results desired, all components and operating systems in the home needed to be evaluated and scored.

The construction process began with the engagement of Habitat for Humanity. Their army of volunteers worked through the home and removed existing products and materials that have continued value, but were not necessary for our plans. This was a win for both us; they received the value for their future projects, and we avoided sending excess material to the overcrowded landfills. Once completed, we were able to begin the extensive renovation process. Our home owner stated, "The team took the time to answer our questions and made sure that we understood the process at every step. In a tough spot, they were real life-savers."



The master suite was extended to add a new bath and closet suite. Interior walls were removed to open up the floor plan. Windows and doors were replaced with more energy efficient double pane models. Previous insulation was removed from both the walls and ceiling for a more efficient open cell expanded foam. The kitchen was redesigned and opened to the family room, and even new butler pantry and wine rooms were added out of existing space. Upon completion, the home had only increased by approximately 300 square feet. However, the impact was much larger. They had the space in the areas were they wanted it, and the open floor plan helped the home feel much larger than its approximate 2600 livable square feet.

Before the homeowners moved into their “new” old home, we had the home performance tested by the energy auditor. The air conditioning system was tested individually by a system of pressurizing the isolated ducts and examining for leaks. The overall home was similarly pressurized to ensure that air infiltrating the home was through the designed fresh air intake system leading directly to the filtration system. Each of the plumbing fixtures and energy consuming devices were also field-verified by the consultant.

The final result was the first home in the state of Texas to receive the “Emerald” designation under the GHBA Green Built Gulf Coast’s Renovation program. The Emerald designation is the program’s highest designation under the commended National Green Building Standard (NGBS). Despite the home being approximately 300 square feet larger, energy consumption was reduced by approximately 52.1%, and water consumption was reduced an estimated 52.2 %.



We are also honored that this home received the National Association of Remodeling Industry’s (NARI) 2012 Contractor of the Year Award from our local Houston Chapter for an entire home renovation between \$250k-\$500k category. It was also selected as the NARI Houston Chapter Judge’s Choice renovation and received NARI Green Recognition status locally, regionally, and nationally.

**(upper left)** The precise architectural details in this kitchen overlook the family room that introduces a gentle mix of Old World and California country elements.

**(lower left)** This home blends modern day technology with historical architectural details.

**(upper right)** The casual relaxed butler’s pantry in this Tuscan home facilitates casual meals and planned events.

**(lower right)** This European gourmet kitchen is defined by the new century appliances and vintage cabinetry.



This lifestyle-friendly home is artfully designed to integrate indoor and outdoor living areas by combining style and comfort. Multiple French doors encircle the luxury vanishing edge pool and covered loggia (above right).



I think every member of our team would tell you that not every home, or homeowner, is a viable candidate for certification under the GBGC's program. It takes tremendous dedication, passion, and desire to achieve this goal. However, I think wisdom gained from our experience has better equipped us as a team and a company to explore other avenues that previously were undiscovered. Even without the goal of green certification, we have redefined our best practice to include environmentally responsible products and techniques that help to save our customers money and give them a better product. These best practices are not only limited to whole house renovations. We incorporate them into smaller kitchen and bath remodels, as well as our custom homes.

Last year I contributed an article to HDR on the trend of clients' growing preference for homes that were not as large, but impeccably designed and detailed. In the past year, we have seen that trend continue. The evolution of the "new" old home chronicled in this article is a logical extension of that trend. In Houston, we truly are blessed with some landmark areas of town with truly remarkable older homes. Some of those homes are special and help to define the area in which they reside. As a custom builder and renovator, we have uniquely positioned ourselves with the knowledge and expertise to guide you through the decision making process. Our mission is to create distinguished homes and cultivate valued relationships. Maybe you, too, have an "old" home that can be made new! If so, call today; we would love to meet you and hear your story. ■

#### **RESOURCE**

**Kirkpatrick Design, LLC**  
KirkpatrickHomeDesign.com  
4545 Post Oak Place, suite 347  
Houston Texas 77027