

# PRIVATE QUARTERS

SPOTLIGHT HOME

## The ultimate indoor/outdoor escape

A top-down overhaul transformed this '20s-era home into a modern oasis.

By **Lori Keong**  
for The AJC

After months of being cooped up at home during the pandemic, Brian McBrearty and Dustin Mullis really just wanted a new indoor/outdoor space they could call home – with a pool being a non-negotiable. So when they spotted this 1920s Craftsman home in Virginia-Highland one morning on Zillow, they called their realtor and squeezed in a viewing on the last day the house was open to buyers.

They quickly fell in love with the place, which offers stunning views of the Atlanta skyline, and signed the papers in June last year. A year of costly renovations later, they were finally able to move in last month. As these things tend to go, the renovation plans started out modestly then snowballed into a top-down overhaul. “We joked that pretty much the only thing we left was the hole in the ground for the pool,” Mullis said.

The whole house transformation included repainting the traditional exterior black, adding a second floor with two main bedrooms, a guest bedroom, a laundry room and an office, plus tacking on a pool house and carport outside. And then there was the massive undertaking of refreshing the backyard and pool area, which the couple notes was the most tedious part of the process. “Our whole back of the house has these large windows looking out onto the yard, so we spent so much time and effort perfecting it,” McBrearty said.

The pair turned to Leisa Presmanes, the principal and lead designer of Presmanes Interiors, to help them bring their vision of a contemporary, elevated design scheme to life. Presmanes said the goal was to make the home feel like a party for entertaining friends – with clean lines, black accents and pristine white walls that allow the couple’s love of pop art to take center stage.

Both of them were open to non-traditional ideas, which helped steer the home into a more experimental direction. “I’m sure a lot of people wouldn’t paint their house black, but we did,” McBrearty said. “We’re putting together a media room where everything is monochromatic. We have a snake bathroom with a snake mirror.”

Marrying the couple’s very different personal design tastes was a bit of a challenge, Presmanes noted, exemplified by their separate bedrooms that each have their own distinct style. McBrearty and Mullis have been together for 15 years, but with opposite sleep schedules and bedtime rituals, they’ve found that it’s easier to occupy their own spaces during the week. “He likes having a fan on, I don’t like a fan. I’m a night owl and he goes to bed early,” McBrearty explained.

Something everyone who sees the house can agree on, though, is how special the wall-to-wall iron doors are out back.

The wide doors replaced a staircase obstructing the view of the yard and open accordion-style to seamlessly connect the home with the outdoors.

“I love the family room area with the natural light and handsome kitchen,” Presmanes said. “The view out to the pool is wonderful, and the doors frame everything so beautifully.”



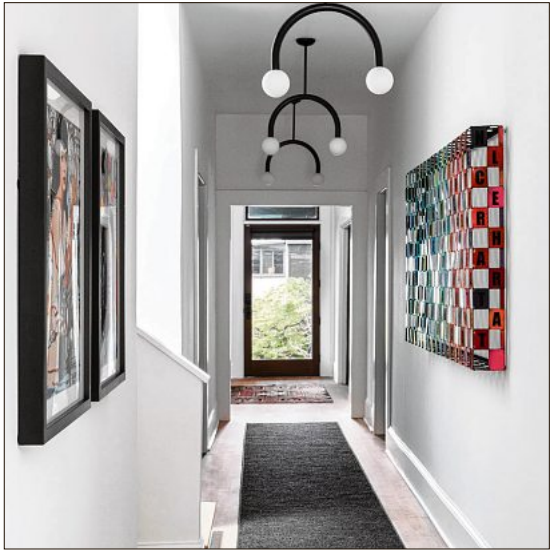
A former bedroom was converted into this airy, open plan kitchen and family room, which soaks in plenty of light from the wall-to-wall doors. The sofa and black leather chairs in the family room are from Four Hands, the marble coffee table is from Design Within Reach, and the lamp is from Rejuvenation. TEXT BY LORI KEONG/PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE WHITE



**BELOW:** Kitchen countertops and the island use a leathered Negroscio quartzite finish fabricated by Metro Marble. The hood vent in the kitchen was made with the same plaster finish that the fireplaces were stuccoed with, and the white oak cabinets are custom made from Wood Cabinet Design. TEXT BY LORI KEONG/PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE WHITE



**LEFT:** Dustin Mullis and Brian McBrearty moved into their five-bedroom, 4,050-square foot Ponce Place home in Virginia-Highland this June. They’re photographed with their chihuahua Trish, who sleeps in a miniature doghouse version of their home. TEXT BY LORI KEONG/PHOTO BY HEIDI HARRIS



A line of Happy Pendants by Regina Andrews dangle from the ceiling in the front hallway, which offers a view from the front door to the backyard. A pair of paintings by Andrea Mary Marshall are displayed on the left hand side opposite some custom steel artwork by John Patrick McChesney. TEXT BY LORI KEONG/PHOTO BY HEIDI HARRIS



Compared with the traditional facade of the house, the homeowners love the modern A-frame style of the back of the home overlooking the new pool and spacious 12-person hot tub in the backyard. The wide doors open all the way to let people traipse in and out. TEXT BY LORI KEONG/PHOTO BY HEIDI HARRIS

### SNAPSHOT

**Residents:** Brian McBrearty, Dustin Mullis and Trish (chihuahua)  
**Resident occupations:** Both own and operate six Zaxby’s restaurants  
**Location:** Virginia-Highland  
**Square feet:** 4,050  
**Bedrooms/baths:** 5 bedrooms, 4 full baths and 1 half bath  
**Year built:** 1920  
**Year bought:** 2021  
**Favorite architectural elements:** The big front porch, high ceilings, fireplaces and big windows with lots of light.  
**Type of renovations:** A full home renovation that included adding a new floor upstairs (2,000 square feet), updating the pool, adding a new spa hot tub and building a pool house/carport  
**Cost of renovations:** a little over \$1 million  
**Builder:** Lawrence Stacconi



The original exterior of the home was painted all black, from the stairs to the columns and ceilings. TEXT BY LORI KEONG/PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE WHITE

**Architect:** Adam Stillman  
**Contractors:** Landscaping by Thrive, audio/visual installations by SB Comm, pool and spa by Precision Pools, custom cabinetry by Wood Cabinet

Design, iron work on the Juliet balcony by Mike Wsol and Static Sense  
**Favorite room:** the kitchen/family room with wall-to-wall iron doors that accordion open

and overlook the pool/spa  
**Favorite piece of furniture:** the dining room table  
**Favorite outdoor feature:** pool and spa  
**Design consultants:** Interior designer Leisa Presmanes of Presmanes Interiors, AGM Stoneworks  
**Artwork:** Angel Allen, Bob Landstrom, Kathy Wright, John Patrick McChesney and Andrea Mary Marshall  
**Resources:** Furniture and decor from Four Hands, CB2, Design Within Reach, Etu Home, Loloi, Noir, Arteriors, Anthropologie, Scott’s Antiques Market, Myers Carpet, Wood Cabinet Design; lighting from Rejuvenation, Circa, Cedar and Moss, and Regina Andrews; paint from Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams; wallpaper from Hygge and West; faucets by Kohler; window treatments from The Shade Store