





# Rittenhouse Renovation

A city couple revamps their home just in time for a new arrival. By Shannon Grotzinger

**T**hey fell in love with the historic Rittenhouse Square property in spring 2005, but the thirtysomething home owners who bought this four-story, split-level residence spent almost a year renovating the brownstone—tearing down walls, shifting staircases and even remodeling the basement—before settling there to start a family.

"We renovated the main bulk of the house," says the home owner, an e-commerce executive. "Something that made the project easier [was that] the previous owners took great care of the property ... which meant we were able to jump in," he says. Leaving Center City was never an option for the couple, who say the Rittenhouse neighborhood was a natural fit for their growing family. "It's easy to walk to the square, to Walnut Street, to lots of different restaurants. It's very comfortable and safe," says the home owner, who supervised the completion of a rooftop deck this past May—just in time for the couple's first child.

## PRESERVING HISTORY

To maintain the original character of the house, the couple removed carpeting and restored the hardwood floors, salvaging as much of the baseboard and crown molding as they could. (Whatever couldn't be saved was replaced with woodwork that matched the original pieces.) "We were very aware that we wanted to maintain the character," says the home owner. "[W]e didn't want to play with it to the point that it wouldn't be historic," he adds. The owners decorated with sentimental pieces and more contemporary finds—the wall hanging is a family treasure and the chandelier is new. With a light color on the walls, the front hall appears spacious and airy rather than narrow and cramped.











### OPENING UP

The kitchen used to be closed off. The owners wanted to modernize it and open everything up a little more," says Cheryl Bestenheider, an architect with Krieger & Associates Architects who worked on the home with architect Jeff Krieger. In order to create space, the team removed a wall that separated the kitchen from the dining area. "We're not formal people," says the home owner, a former elementary and middle school teacher. "We didn't see ourselves using a big formal dining room. We [like the] ... open feel," she says. To add interest and create contrast with the stainless steel appliances, the couple asked the team to expose a brick wall in the kitchen.

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### FINDING ZEN

Taking care of a new baby can be exhausting, so it's only natural that the home owner's favorite space is the relaxing master bathroom. "I like the way it all came together. It's peaceful and meets our needs," she says. Extensive renovations turned a dreary, boxy bathroom into a colorful, Zen-like haven. The bathing area's floor was dropped several inches, and the old sink was replaced with his-and-hers basins. (The iron and crystal flower chandelier is a budget friendly buy from Urban Outfitters). Keeping with the couple's penchant for natural-looking hardwood, the team sided the bathtub with the same materials used to construct the vanity.



### MAXIMIZING THE SPACE

"[When] we climbed up the ladder [to the roof], we just looked at each other and said it's too nice to not put something up here," says the home owner.

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ton. When finished next November, the residences will overshadow other properties in Philly—literally. The building, which to date has cost \$300 million to build, will be the city's tallest residential property at 48 stories.

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Residents will be able to enjoy fine dining courtesy of an in-house restaurant (slated to open in April 2008) created by chef Eric Ripert. While most of the details are still under wraps, sources say the dining destination will feature American cuisine prepared with local and organic products. A high-end spa is also in the works.

At press time, almost 50 percent of the 244 units have been sold. One-, two-, and three-bedroom condos and penthouses are available, starting at \$545,000 and hitting upwards of \$12 million. As an added bonus, residents will receive a 30 percent discount on Ritz-Carlton hotels all over the world. For information, visit [PhiladelphiaResidences.com](http://PhiladelphiaResidences.com). —Shaannon Grotzinger

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