

Preserving the past, moving into the present

Renovation of Logan Square two-flat embraces history while moving into the 21st century

John Parizek had a problem. His building was old. And it needed work.

Built in 1897, the brick two-flat located in the 2600 block of North Washtenaw was certainly livable. Parizek himself had occupied the first-floor apartment for more than 25 years while renting out the second, but necessary improvements were long overdue.

What Parizek did not want to do, however, was make changes to the building that would sacrifice its architectural and historical integrity. As the secretary of Logan Square Preservation, this was an issue close to his heart.

Enter Frank Michalski.

Parizek was casually acquainted with the Logan Square resident, who works at Northlight Architects, from church and Preservation Society meetings. But it was samples of Michalski's work at the Merchandise Mart's Bungalow Festival that impressed Parizek.

Michalski had much experience redesigning older buildings, working on six to 10 such projects per year. He had even renovated the home of one of Parizek's friends. He also shared Parizek's belief in renovating existing homes to maintain and adhere to a neighborhood aesthetic, as opposed to the ever-popular "quick-flip" method practiced by building owners looking to turn their units into fast cash as the expense of the building's place in the community. He was a perfect fit for Parizek's needs.

Together, the pair worked



J. GEIL/Staff Photographer

Architect Frank Michalski and John Parizek in his newly remodeled kitchen.

The improvements show that despite a building's age, even the smallest of fixes can transform it both ecologically and economically for the better.

towards bringing the 112-year-old structure into the modern era. Renovations small and large were addressed, from replacing the outdated electrical system and expanding cramped bathrooms and kitchens to completely renovating an unfinished basement into a livable family area, including lowering the floor to gain more headroom.

Most impressive are the "green" advancements made to the building, including adding new insulation to the second-floor ceiling to prevent heat loss, an efficient radiant heating system in the basement floor, high-efficiency furnaces and washer-dryer units, "on-demand" water heaters with smaller tanks that create hot water only when needed as

opposed to continual hot water storage and mini-zoned cooling systems that provide air conditioning only to specific rooms, as opposed to the whole building.

The improvements show that despite a building's age, even the smallest of fixes can transform it both ecologically and economically for the better.

Today, Parizek's residence sits proud and comfortable once again amongst Logan Square's older buildings, many of which have undergone similar updates. It's a development absolutely indicative of the neighborhood — one immediately connected to its identity and heritage, but also aware of its responsibility to the future.

—Phil Morehart