

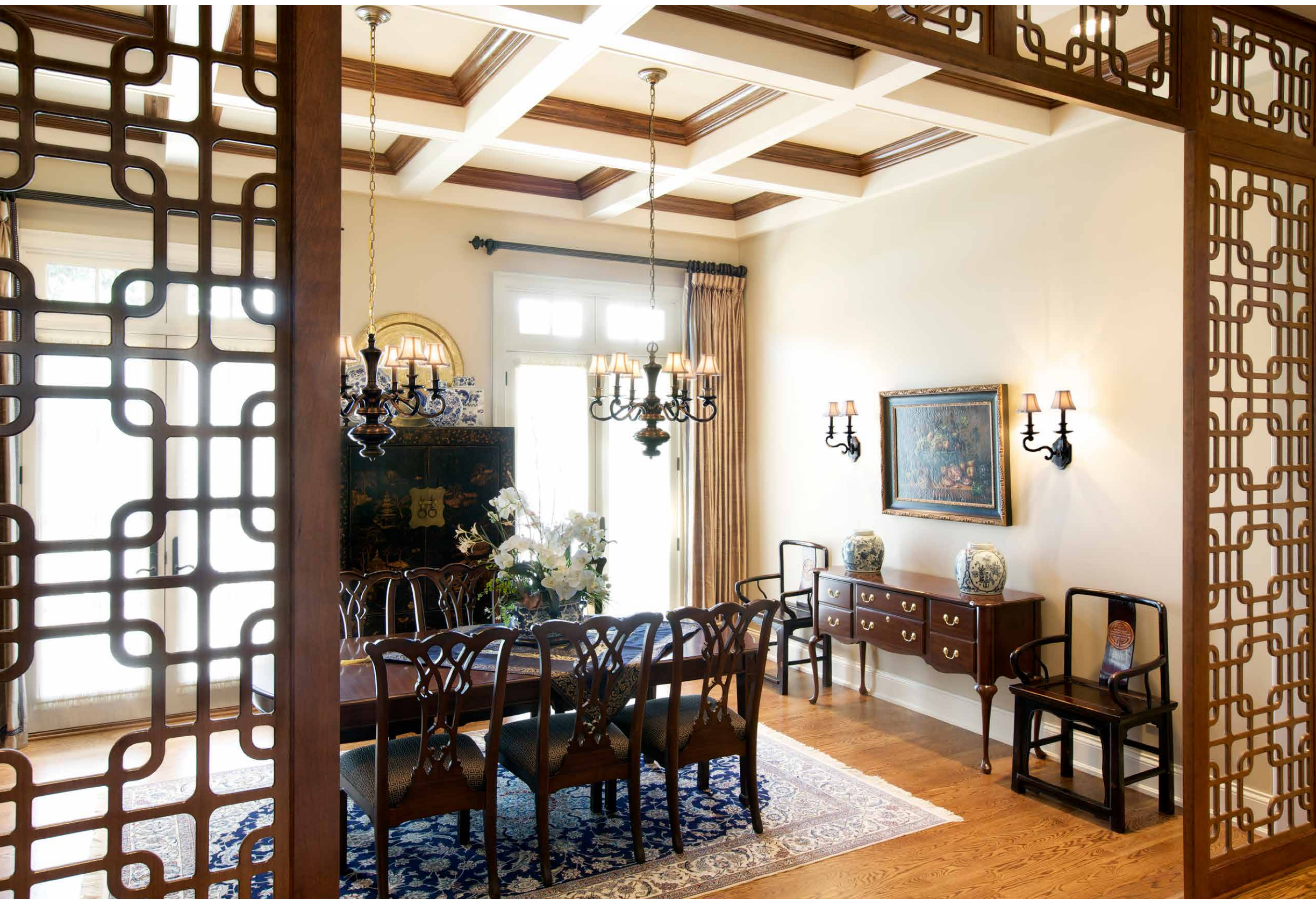
Suburban

THE *Dream Team*



COLLABORATION TRANSFORMS A
ST. ALBANS HOUSE INTO A HOME

BY KATIE O'CONNOR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER SILVERBERG



How do you make a house a home? It's a challenge every designer faces—a challenge that's even greater when there is no house to decorate. But when designer Gail Doveikis of G.M. Doveikis & Associates found herself in just such a situation, she saw it as an opportunity. Her client had approached her about decorating an as-yet-unbuilt house, and she eagerly accepted. Three years later, she calls the experience her dream project.

Together, Gail, Dick Busch of Dick Busch Architects and Glenn Brinkmann of St. Albans Construction set about creating their clients' vision of a warm and welcoming house that would host frequent family gatherings and would accommodate the couple's three grown children, their spouses and a gaggle of grandkids.

The result is a stately, brick home that's both sophisticated and approachable. The exterior's intricate brickwork and warm-toned Indiana limestone lend the house a historical air, while the interior's generously scaled rooms, soft color palate and multiple fireplaces create an inviting and hospitable atmosphere. Large windows at the back of the house infuse the space with light and offer glimpses of the curving Missouri River through the woods, sloping to its banks.

"I got to be involved from the very beginning," Gail explains, noting that she even had input on the color of the slate for the roof and the brick for the exterior. "Most architects, the exterior is their turf, but Dick was great about listening to my suggestions. Glenn, too—I sketched moldings and built-in bookcases; he was so helpful ... and unflappable. It was really a collaboration."

"They all brought something unique to the house," agrees the homeowner, who refers to Gail, Dick and Glenn as "the dream team."

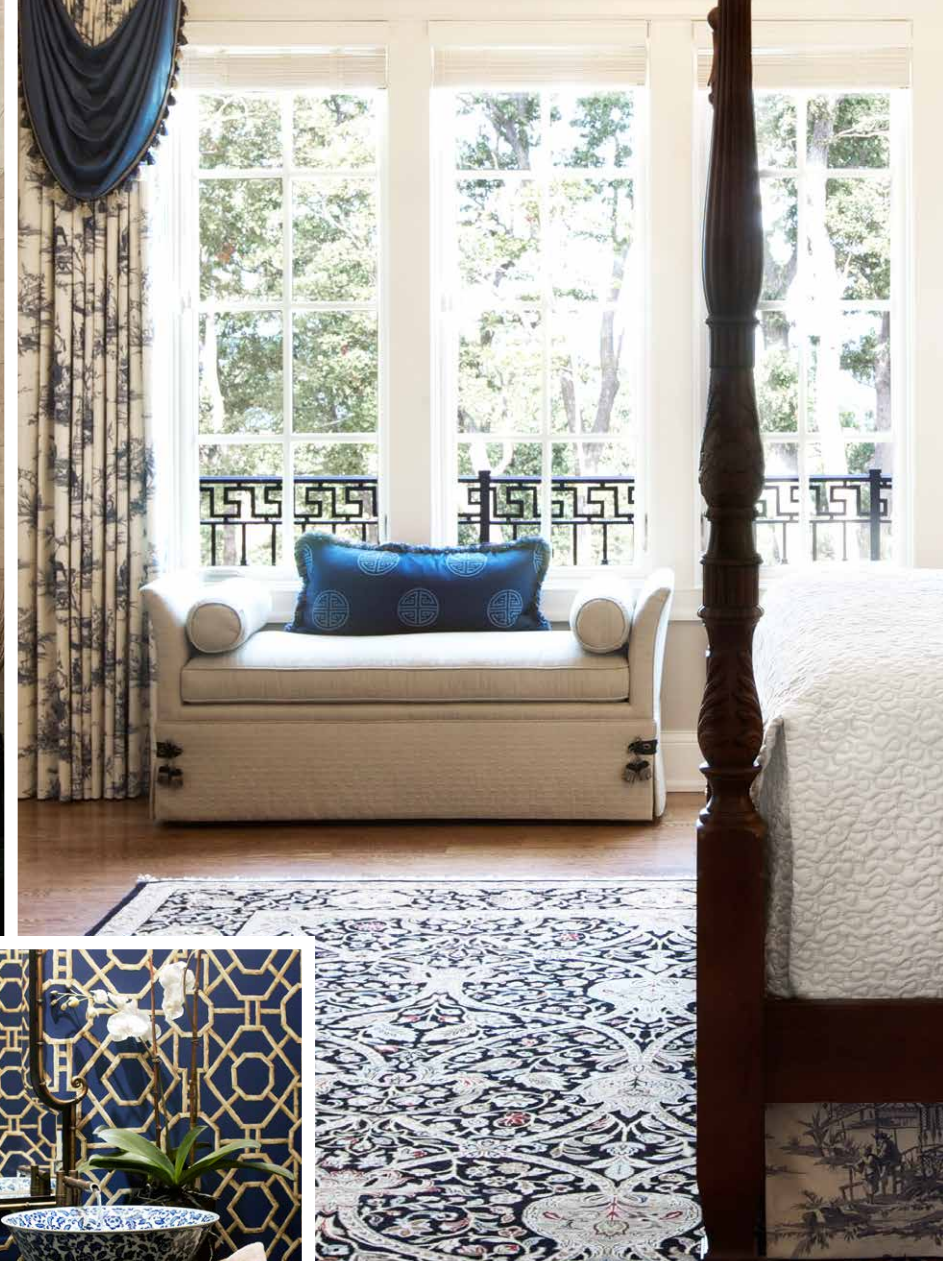
But the dream team's biggest success may be the sense of family that pervades the house from top to bottom, a real expression of their client. "I didn't want people to walk in and think, 'This is a big house,'" says the homeowner. "This was going to be our home—not just a house. The whole thing was about family."

For Dick, that meant designing the layout with the couple's grown children and grandchildren in mind. A large kitchen offers plenty of space for multiple cooks, and the second floor houses bedrooms for visiting family, including a room just for the grandkids. The lower level, which opens to the backyard's built-in pool, features a large family room (complete with snack bar), a playroom for the kids, a mother-in-law suite and a media room for family movie night.

Opposite page: With children and grandchildren in mind, the "dream team" created a space for family gatherings.



Opposite page, top: Multiple chefs can create culinary masterpieces for the homeowners' large family in the spacious kitchen, designed by Mark Dysart, Marc Christian Fine Cabinetry. **Opposite page, bottom:** Located off the master suite, the Conservatory offers the best views in the home. The swivel chairs, by Sherrill Upholstery, are the ideal place to sit and catch the beautiful sunset. **Below:** Showcasing treasures from their travels abroad, the homeowners mix Chinese accents with classical, traditional pieces.



For Gail, it meant infusing the décor with meaning and history. She began before the house was even built, taking an inventory of her client's existing furniture and noting measurements. It allowed her to request tweaks to the architect's plans designed to fit specific pieces, such as the archway specifically built to house a pair of matching Chinese cabinets.

But here, too, she took her cue from the homeowner, choosing a scheme of classic traditional with Chinese accents based on the homeowner's Oriental rugs and collection of blue and white porcelain. Throughout the house, warm neutrals are punctuated by muted blues and pops of red. New pieces mingle with Chinese furniture and accessories purchased in Singapore, where the family lived for four years: An intricate screen and chest in the great room harmonize with Chinese Chippendale chairs; an old Chinese cradle sits next to modern cribs in the nursery and a mahjong table fits right in with the modern television and pool table in the family room, among countless others. Each piece recalls a story (such as the delicate basket purchased at Singapore's Thieves' Market and carefully flown home on the homeowner's lap), filling the new house with the family's history.

"It was such a big part of our lives," the homeowner says of her

family's time living abroad. "And it influenced us in so many ways that we want it to always be part of our lives."

Gail extended the Chinese theme by adding new touches as well, such as the delicate wooden screen that frames the entrance to the sunken dining room and the bamboo wallpaper in the master bath. In the kitchen, old Chinese coins are set into the tilework above the range and the sink. And when the homeowner wanted the refrigerator to look like a Chinese cabinet, Gail designed a custom-made brass medallion to surround the appliance's door handles.

But she was careful not to let the décor outshine the graceful architecture and high-quality craftsmanship of the house. Window treatments, for example, were kept simple so as not to detract from the millwork of the windows and the spectacular view they frame.

"A good designer does what the client wants," Gail says. "But there's a little bit of me in this house, too. I would jump at the chance to work with Dick and Glenn again; the collaboration was just absolutely wonderful."

And successful, given the family's reaction to the home: "The kids didn't grow up in this house," says the homeowner, "but they absolutely love it." ■ See www.stlouishomesmag.com for resources.



This page: The lower level opens to the built-in pool with glimpses of the Missouri River through the woods. Custom windows from Marvin Windows and Doors afford beautiful views of the river on all levels of the home.