

Kevin Hart and Associates

Historical restoration and custom home design specialists



The expression, "everything old is new again," is one way to describe the work of Kevin Hart and Associates. Established in 1990, the full-service architectural firm has carved a niche in historical restoration and custom home design with a traditional flair.

"We're kind of like a 1920s design firm," says architect Kevin Hart, who directs a talented team of architects, designers and engineers. "Many of our new homes look like they were built in the '20s, and the homes we renovate are usually 50 to 70 years old. We have a real affection for the old houses."

"We try to maintain as much of the existing home as possible, keep the character, the style, the detail, and then build the addition," says Patty Seim, chief designer and senior project director. "We restored an 1889 farmhouse in a historic district in Farmington. The city's historic committee had to approve color, style and all the exterior trim and finishes. When the project was finished you couldn't see the difference between the old house and the addition."

"We always say the house will tell us what to do," Hart adds. "We take a lot of pride in the fact that when you look at a house we've done, you really can't tell we were ever there."

The firm's commercial projects often have traditional architectural themes. An 1890 Gothic-style church in downtown Northville became the centerpiece of a retail complex. Two buildings were added to complement the church, now a retail shop, and the owners built their residence in the rafters.

The firm has worked on many 1970's "cloned" tract homes. When remodeled, no two are alike. "We

worked on two identical old colonials on Pierce in Birmingham and both are night- and day-different. It keeps it interesting for us," Seim says.

At Kevin Hart and Associates, an initial meeting with prospective clients is complimentary. Once the firm receives a go-ahead on a renovation project, the client's home is measured from top to bottom and a full set of existing drawings are made. As the clients make decisions, the drawings get more detailed. It's a low-key and methodical process so clients are not overwhelmed with too many decisions at once.

Hart was a builder working for Walbridge Aldinger years ago. He has seen some of the pitfalls design drawings get into and is able to avoid them.

"We'd like to think our drawings are really friendly to the builder," Hart says of the concise, detailed plans. "We have learned a lot from the building industry, what works, what doesn't work and what isn't conveyed properly."

"We try to design to the point where the contractor is going to have so few questions, they'll be able to just fly with it," Seim adds.

Details include everything from doorknobs, faucets, hinges and sinks to tile patterns and manufacturers' part numbers. "We will cut cross sections where you're looking back at the house and show mantel details, column details, archways, kitchen cabinets, bookshelves and other interior detail," Hart explains. "While the front end takes a little bit more design labor, it really saves a lot of duress later."

Final construction drawings are used in the bid process where clients choose the builder they want to work with.

"There's a certain group of builders who rise above the rest either through their cost or their quality," Hart says. "We're truly the owner's agent throughout the bid process. We'll act on their behalf and their best interests. We don't have any affiliation with builders other than good relations."



"We do preliminaries freehand. It keeps that little artistry edge to it," says Seim.

Like the other members of the firm, Seim is passionate about her work. "I love expanding a client's home and making it just that much better. It's very challenging," she says.

"When we encounter surprises they don't overwhelm us. We're adaptable," Hart adds. "There's always a solution."

Key members of Kevin Hart and Associates include experienced senior project designers Deborah Hack and Daniel Smuk, project engineer Daniel Cherewick, project architect Robert Tata and designer/draftspersons Kristi DeLeo and Lori Ditchie. Aimee Coffin provides graphic illustration for key projects. A Notre Dame graduate and Birmingham native, Kevin Hart has worked in the construction industry for more than 22 years as an engineer, designer, construction manager and architect.

"We have taken a long time to assemble this conscientious team of professionals and I'm very proud of them," he says.



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