

November 11, 2016

LUXURY HOME OF THE WEEK

Here's what \$2.5 million buys in Irving Park

By DENNIS RODKIN



Graphic print wallpaper, white woodwork and a tailored divan offer a sophisticated welcome in the foyer of this seven-year-old house in the Irving Park neighborhood.

It's the first glimpse of a house whose layout, finishes and lot were hand-picked by a guy who knows houses: Mario Greco, a prolific real estate broker with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices KoenigRubloff Realty Group, and his wife, Julie Greco built the house on Tripp Avenue for themselves in 2009.

The Grecos and their design team installed a handsome old-fashioned staircase, window seats and other links to the past, plus newfangled amenities like a sharp, easy-to-clean mudroom and laundry just for dogs.

The house is spacious (five bedrooms in its 6,600 square feet) and stands on a third of an acre, a rarity in the city. The layout takes full advantage of all that outdoor space, with a richly landscaped front yard, cooking and dining areas out back and an indoor-outdoor sunroom designed to bridge the two realms.

Mario Greco said he's planning to build a new house, so the pair are listing the house Nov. 14 for \$2.5 million. Mario Greco is the listing agent.

Mario and Julie Greco built a traditional-feeling home for themselves in Irving Park and then sprinkled a big dose of contemporary style over it. "We wanted a home that feels like it's been here a while, but is right up to date," said Mario Greco. An agent with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices KoenigRubloff Realty Group, he's representing the home. The house, on a third of an acre on Tripp Avenue, goes on the market Nov. 14 with an asking price of \$2.5 million.



The brick and limestone facade, designed by architect Chris Walsh of Tandem Architecture & Construction in Chicago, was meant to "look like it had been there forever with the older neighbors," Greco said. The bricks mimic the smaller size of older bricks, and the grout between them was left a bit sloppy to prevent a too-flat brand-new look. The zigzagging front walk helps emphasize the large lot size.



A hanging staircase is a fixture in contemporary-style homes, but for this more traditional setting, interior architect Suzanne Lovell combined the concept with a historical stacked-boxes stair design for an eye-catching look. Furnishings and finishes were by Elizabeth Krueger Designs.



Glass interior windows in the dining room strike a balance between the modern desire for an open floor plan and the traditional notion of an enclosed formal dining room. The aim was to have a space that is "fresh and modern, not stodgy," he said.



The muted palette extends into the kitchen, a brightly daylit place thanks to windows on two sides. "There are 78 windows in the house," Greco said. Thanks to the large lot size, "we have a lot of light we can bring inside."



An office off the foyer opens onto a raised terrace at left, and looks out over the front porch at right. The stained-glass window on the rear wall is a remnant of the dilapidated house that was on the site when the Greco's bought it.



The mantelpiece in the family room is framed with recycled gunmetal. The hanging doors slide open to the sun porch next door to create a connected suite of indoor and outdoor spaces.



A thin veneer of wood covers the sun porch walls with a herringbone pattern; the ceiling is bamboo. The window seats here are deeper than most in the house because when the windows are open on a pleasant day, "this is the best place to take a nap with the dogs," Greco said. With windows and door open, this space becomes an almost-outdoors room.



The outdoor space includes a pergola-covered seating area, fireplace and partial outdoor kitchen. "It's an extension of the indoors," Greco said.



One reason the Grecos built in Irving Park was for the big lots, Mario said. They started out building on a lot that was 50 feet wide and 156 deep. They later bought the lot next door, 37.5 feet by 156, denoted by the wood fence. Greco said their total investment in land and construction of the house is \$3.4 million, about one-third more than their asking price of \$2.5 million.



The master bedroom on the second floor has a vaulted ceiling and opens onto a covered terrace that looks over the back yard. The flooring here, and throughout the house, is quarter-sawn white oak. There are three more bedrooms on this floor, along with two full baths and a laundry room.



The family dogs bathe in style, too, here in their own dedicated mudroom, shower and laundry room. The stainless cabinetry is easy to clean, and the laundry machines here assure that dogs' hairy towels and such don't go through the same machines as the family's clothes. That way "you're not picking their hair off your clothes all the time." [Click here to return to the story.](#)