



HOMES  
INTERIOR DESIGN

# IN THE HEART OF HARLESTON VILLAGE

*A spirited redesign with dramatic colors and fearless prints transforms the interior of a downtown home*

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T TAKES AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET TO ENVISION a 1970s-era home in Downtown Charleston as a bold, modern statement that still fits into the city's iconic, traditional architecture. That vision was easy for Danielle and Greg Thompson, serial entrepreneurs from Sumter, South Carolina, who have worked tirelessly to revitalize Sumter through their construction and hospitality companies. In addition to several other hospitality and event rental spaces, Danielle Thompson's name is associated with Hamptons restaurant on Main Street in historic Sumter, a fine dining establishment she opened that features American cuisine with an Italian slant. Husband Greg Thompson founded and operates several construction companies and recently renovated a country club and golf course reenvisioned by Jack Nicklaus II.

Entrepreneurs are known for their calculated risk-taking, visionary ideas, quick decision-making and a roll-up-their-sleeves mentality. They are motivated by challenges and see setbacks as opportunities. These are the characteristics the Thompsons leaned into as they snapped up a 45-year-old home in Harleston Village the same day it went on the market. They had been looking for a place to call home in Charleston since business ventures often bring them to the Holy City. The home they purchased nods to Charleston's eponymous single-house architecture and its famous courtyard design, which drew them in immediately. The neighborhood, which has been built over many generations, is home to both historic residences and more modern interpretations and is walkable to the College of Charleston, shopping and restaurants on King Street and Colonial Lake.

"We love the location because it is so walkable. We have always loved Charleston, beginning with the time we spent our honeymoon here," says Danielle Thompson. "It's an easy drive from Sumter, and we wanted to have our own bed in the city."

It wasn't a question that she would turn to interior designer Nicole Norris to transform the home; Norris provides design services to both residential and commercial clients from design studios in Sumter and Mount Pleasant. "We have done so many projects over the last 20 years with Nicole Norris' talented design team," Thompson says. "I wouldn't use any other firm. I always have a vision of what the space can be, and they want me to have that."

The kitchen only needed a fresh coat of paint and new tile backsplash to integrate it with the rest of the colorful home. The backsplash is designed with Artistic Tile supplied by Palmetto Tile Distributors.

**previous:**  
A Charleston-style enclosed brick courtyard helps this 1979 home assimilate with nearby historic residences.





The living room is one of the first rooms visitors see and introduces the home's lively color and pattern combinations. A completely rebuilt bar with a blue glass tile backsplash surrounds the fireplace. A Massoud sectional in Dots Emerald fabric provides cozy seating for a large number of guests. Custom draperies sewn using Thibaut fabric add pattern to the room.

“Danielle has exquisite taste and great style,” says Mary Kathryn Hulme, who served as the lead designer for the Thompsons’ full-home renovation, with Norris providing support services as necessary. “We just needed to help her make this home her own and fall in step with her vision and vibe. With all three of us working together, I think we were successful in giving her family the comfortable place that worked for their particular needs.”

The design team focused on bringing bold, dramatic interior elements to the architecturally traditional home, starting with a spunky horse-and-carriage-themed wallpaper in the dining room. “Danielle fell in love with this wallpaper. She is not afraid of color or boldly patterned wallpaper,” says Norris, who is known for her highly chromatic projects. “This wallpaper was the jumping-off point for the home’s color palette of black, blue and emerald green, plus a bit of pink, which is Danielle’s favorite color. She is not a conservative client when it comes to color, which is refreshing.”

Hulme says seeing the dining room wallpaper from Mind The Gap go up was exciting since it kicked off the entire project.

Norris and Hulme used wallpaper throughout the home, to the delight of the homeowners. “With the advent of digital printing capabilities, new wallpaper companies are popping up everywhere,” Norris says. “Wallpaper is experiencing a comeback and is becoming more artistic, sometimes with artists’ fine art renderings printed onto it. It is a fun element that has a big impact on the final look.”

The whole-home black-and-white palette with splashes of bold color imparts a modern vibe to its interior while it maintains a historic look on the exterior. Black window trim, black tile in the primary bathroom and kitchen, and a black vent hood provide touches of drama. “Black roller shades are so unexpected, instead of the traditional woven shades or plantation shutters,” says Hulme.

Before the excitement of the design process began, however, the team faced a major hurdle. At the last minute, the general contractor decided he was overloaded with other projects and backed out of overseeing the Thompsons’ home renovation. This is where the design team’s entrepreneurial bent and willingness to take risks took over. “Nicole stepped up and filled the gap, agreeing to serve as the general contractor on our project,” Thompson says. “Her company truly went above and beyond what was expected.”

“The subcontractors were hard to find because they are all very busy in the Lowcountry, but thankfully I have been doing business in Charleston for so long that the subs agreed to work us in,” Norris says. “Danielle found a painter and a floor refinishing company in Sumter that was willing to travel to Charleston. The biggest challenge was learning about all of the permits needed to renovate a property downtown. Once we got a handle on that and got ourselves on the subcontractors’ calendars, everything worked out just fine.”

The process was manageable for Norris and Hulme because many of the renovations were cosmetic, and the bones of the house were good. They set about specifying colorful wallcoverings and fabrics to add an edge to the design. To complement the dining room wallpaper, for example, Hulme chose a red-dotted fabric on a white background with a bold black and blue Scalamantré trim for custom-made draperies in the room.

Just two rooms received architectural changes—the living room and the primary bathroom. Immediately to the left of the front entrance, the formal living room features a wood-burning fireplace





The brightly colored horse-and-carriage Fasnacht wallpaper by Mind The Gap was the first design choice made for the home. It is accented with drapery in Cherica Paprika fabric by Magnolia Fabrics with Scalamandré trim detail.



After the carpeting on the foyer stairs was removed, the walls were painted in Sherwin-Williams "Iceberg" and the wainscoting in "Greek Villa," which read as a neutral backdrop to let dramatic accessories shine.

**right:**  
The design team sourced the primary bathroom's black-and-white floral porcelain tile at Palmetto Tile Distributors.





The primary bedroom is a study in vivid hues, including the Massoud headboard covered in Onassis Velour fabric in “Classy Pink,” which is an updated iteration of the classic paisley print. The window treatments are custom designed with pink fabric from Magnolia Fabrics.



as the focal point. It was surrounded by built-in shelving painted white that was part of a wet bar area with a wine fridge. The Norris design team removed the shelving, added light-reflecting blue glass tile on each side of the fireplace as a backsplash, and custom-designed a new brass and glass shelving system to hold glassware and other barware. It's now a wonderful place to relax with friends for a quick drink just steps from the front entryway. Along with an emerald green sectional and lively draperies, it sets the tone for the colorful design to follow in the other rooms.

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They repeated the glass and brass shelving in the dining room, positioning a similar unit over a new console. “The different levels of glass and brass create a sculptural display, which ties into the living room and is a transition for the passageway between the kitchen and the casual den,” says Norris.

Norris and Hulme redesigned the primary bathroom, reconfiguring the laundry room and combining a linen closet with an existing small shower to create a larger shower with bold black-and-white floral tile with a more exciting look. “The primary bathroom is small, but the new tile gives a pop to the space and makes it look larger,” Thompson says. “It feels like a special bathroom now.”

The primary bathroom is not the only room that received a tile facelift. While the designers kept the powder room's traditional black-and-white diamond tile floors, they added an antiqued mirror tile wainscot with an old-world appearance to look as if it has been there for many years. With this bit of glam in place, they moved on to choose a new tile backsplash for the kitchen. The black-and-white kitchen tile serves as a neutral backdrop, but it adds a distinctive flavor with a bold triangular motif. “The new tile is dynamic and geometric,” says Norris. Since there already was plenty of cabinet storage and stainless steel appliances from a renovation completed by the previous owners less than two years ago, the kitchen only needed new tile and paint.

The home has a vertical architecture, with modestly sized rooms that are long and narrow on three floors, which allows a separation of spaces for family members. With four bedrooms and three and a half bathrooms, the home is still plenty large enough for each member of the family to have their own space. The cozy study features a beamed ceiling and a second wood-burning fireplace in





A casual den on the second level features the home's second fireplace and beamed ceilings evocative of the Old World.

an old-world style, and window seats are tucked into the third-floor guest suites, so there is room for everyone to experience a dose of privacy.

The Thompsons' son works with them full time in one of their businesses. Since he will be located in Charleston for the foreseeable future, the home's layout is ideal because it allows him to have a separate, casual den on the main level that can be closed off from the rest of the house. A set of stairs leads to a loft with a bedroom and bathroom. Since the arrangement is near the kitchen, he has a completely private wing of the house when other family members pop in for a night or two.

Norris, in her role as the general contractor, scheduled a re-painting of the home from top to bottom, ordered the hardwood floors refinished, and updated the electrical issues that needed to be addressed. She and Hulme worked hard to maintain the historical character built into the home while adding modern touches. "It was fun to add an edge to an old-looking house," Norris says.

Hulme agrees. "While the overall traditional character was already built in, we wanted to bring to the forefront bold, unexpected elements," she says.

The traditional style is evident on the exterior of the home, as it blends into the surrounding neighborhood. One of the oldest neighborhoods on the peninsula, Harleston Village dates back to 1770 and is in the heart of the pedestrian-friendly historic district, with its western border fronting the Ashley River. The Thompsons' home is on a neighborhood street named for a British royal governor. In keeping with all of these historical details, a Charleston-style brick courtyard at the front of the home beckons visitors through the pocket gate into a charming, fully enclosed outdoor living space with manicured flowers and trees. It's a space that many associate with quintessential Charleston style, providing an outdoor entertaining spot with privacy from pedestrians and cars on the street. The designers had the brick repaired and furnished the patio with a dining table and chairs to make it a perfect alfresco retreat. "It makes a pretty entry to the home," Hulme says.

Inside and out, the home provides fully custom features that personalize it for this particular family and their style. "I would never look at this project or any other Nicole Norris project and say, 'Nicole did that,'" Thompson says. "Each of her projects is geared to be a custom representation of the particular homeowner. This was an interesting project with all three of us collaborating and adding our own taste and ideas, but it led us all to agree on a warm and inviting atmosphere that feels comfortable while making a statement." \*

**Dana W. Todd** is a professional writer specializing in interior design, real estate, luxury homebuilding, landscape design, architecture and art.

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