





607 Woodward Apartments

WASHINGTON, D.C.
BONSTRA | HARESIGN

Few firms in Washington, D.C., understand city buildings as well as Bonstra | Haresign. Founded just over 20 years ago by David Haresign, FAIA, and his partner Bill Bonstra, FAIA, the 30-person office has completed countless complex multifamily and commercial renovations, new builds, and adaptive reuses in the city itself and its surrounding towns and suburbs. Meanwhile, David and his wife, Patricia, raised their children in a single-family house in a leafy D.C. neighborhood that was close-in, but not truly urban.





The vintage Woodward building was among the first in the city to offer duplex units. In his renovation, David sought to improve the flow and function between the levels.



“We bought our house because it was close to where Patty worked,” says David. “It was an OK neighborhood then, but it’s now blossomed into a highly desirable one. It had four bedrooms up, 4 and a half baths, and an apartment below. But it was too much house by the time our kids were gone, and I had always wanted to live in a more urban area.” However, David’s wife took a bit longer to convince.

In the meantime, the couple acquired a few investment properties, including one of the earliest duplex apartments in town. It was on the top two floors of a landmark building designed by Harding and Upman called The Woodward on Connecticut Avenue. It’s one of the grand avenues designed by L’Enfant and named after the states of the union at the time. Wider than other streets, these roads break the rigid east/west, north/south grid of the city plan.

Opened in 1910 as a luxury rental building and converted to condos in the ’70s, The Woodward occupies a prominent corner on the southeast side of the Taft Bridge. It’s a notable location overlooking Rock Creek Park and within a cluster of other distinguished period apartment buildings. In addition to their architecture, the buildings here benefit from generous setbacks from the street and a high point just above the original boundary line of the city. On a clear day, standing in front of any of these buildings and looking down Connecticut Avenue provides a piled perspective view of the city that seems to extend all the way down the fall line to the tidal Potomac River bed.

It’s no wonder that the potential of the apartment, which they bought in 2014, captured David’s design imagination immediately. Still, it was close to 10 years before he could realize his goal for the place. In the interim, he did a light “builder grade renovation” on the duplex and put it on the rental market.





“We had great tenants for those years, but I was getting impatient,” he recalls. “And then they decided to move after expecting their second baby.”

Catching the Curve

“The timing of their leaving was perfect,” says David. “I had moved my parents into senior housing 12 years ago, and boy was it a bear. Patty retired in 2019, and we found the center of our lives had moved here.”

So he pulled the sketch he made back in 2014 off the wall and got to work on a full makeover of the two-level, 2,000-square-foot apartment. “That sketch is pretty much what we ended up with. We tore out every partition down to the plumbing.” Apart from the steel structure and the original windows, everything was fair game. Virtually none of the period character of the units remained after the original conversion to condos.

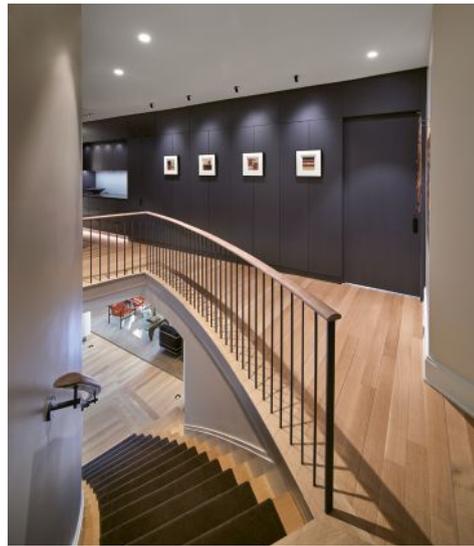
David’s broad goals were to open up the entertaining space on the main level and optimize the flow and acoustics on the upper, private level. Each floor



Seeking “serenity in rigor,” David sweated every detail of the built-in cabinetry flanking the kitchen and living room. Walnut veneers and granite tops suggest fine furniture, while the limited palette allows it to recede graciously into the background. A service kitchen and pantry handles party support.

has 1,000 square feet, constrained in part by a curved inner wall where the stair is located and a turn at the outer wall where the building negotiates the veer of the street just before the bridge. “The stair was in a tube that ended six

feet back from where it is now and it felt really tight at the bottom,” he explains. Removing the wall between the living area and the stair, changing the treads and risers, and creating an ample landing made all the difference in the



perception and function of the space. “It’s now a great processional stair,” he says. “And it was one of the most successful moves we made.”

With the partition walls down between the living room, dining room, kitchen, and stair, the curved inner wall is transformed from a constraint to a dynamic feature of the room.

(“A rounded wall,” David notes, “is every architect’s dream.”) The newly unfettered space is now fully opened to natural light and views from the perimeter wall of windows and liberated from the bowling alley flow that tiered apartments are prone to.

Even the remaining steel columns became a decorative motif in the room,



Pulling back the stairwall and adding a commodious landing invites a stroll to the upstairs gallery. Thickened walls conceal storage in the halls and in the private realm, where David’s wife, Patty, has a dedicated office.





Three bedrooms became one flowing primary suite, with dressing room, bedroom, and office. Custom radiator grilles evoke the building's columns.

with their lengths wrapped in pleasing curves and their connections subtly revealed at the floor and ceiling. New lighting, integrated speakers, and other infrastructure are concealed in dropped ceiling panels David calls “clouds,” while the main focus of the space shifts to walnut veneer cabinetry bookending the living room and kitchen. A similar floating cabinet marks the division between the dining and living areas. A backdrop of white oak floors laid atop the original flooring allows rich cabinetry, furnishings, and the striking blue entry door to pop.

City Sanctuary

With just the empty nest couple to accommodate on the second level, David went about taking down more walls

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ARCHITECT: David Haresign, FAIA, principal in charge, Bonstra | Haresign Architects, Washington, D.C.; Sarah Wingo, AIA, Wyn Design, Washington

BUILDER: AllenBuilt, Bethesda, Maryland

METALSMITH: Rick's Custom Welding

PROJECT SIZE: 2,000 square feet

PHOTOGRAPHY: Anice Hoachlander, Studio HDP

KEY PRODUCTS

BATHROOM VENTILATION: Panasonic

CABINETY: Rift-cut reconstituted European walnut finish, Ferris Custom Cabinetry, Washington

CABINETY HARDWARE: Top Knobs

COOKTOP/OVENS: Wolf

COUNTERTOPS: Honed Virginia Mist granite

DISHWASHER: Miele

FAUCETS: Grohe, Axor Starck

FLOORING: Select rift and quartered white oak

HVAC: Runtal steam radiators

LIGHTING: Artemide, iGuzzini, Juno, MP Lighting, Interlux, Omni, Sonneman, Satulight

LIGHTING CONTROL: Lutron

PAINTS: Sherwin-Williams, Benjamin Moore

REFRIGERATOR: Blomberg

SINKS: Franke (kitchen); Nameeks, Kraus, Signature

TOILETS: Duravit Starck, Kohler

TUB: MTI Baths

WINE REFRIGERATOR: Summit



there, too. What had been three bedrooms, each with its own closet, now became one continuous primary sanctuary. A dressing room occupies one end, the primary bathroom anchors the elbowed space at the other end, and the primary bedroom and Patty’s office stretch between. Pocketing doors allow visual privacy or sight line sweep as desired.

The “great processional stair” retains its grandeur on the second level, too, as it terminates in a new gallery hall for David and Patty’s collected artwork. The thickened gallery walls offer storage, and the hall ends in a secondary bath that serves guests when entertaining on the building’s roof.

In the private rooms, the outer window walls are thickened as well to hide through-wall air conditioning units and new Runtal radiators. Here David, the avowed Modernist, indulges in a small nostalgic flourish—custom radiator grills waterjet cut into patterns suggestive of The Woodward’s ornate entry columns. “It’s a Spanish Colonial Revival building and there are very Baroque tripartite columns with terra cotta in them. They have great

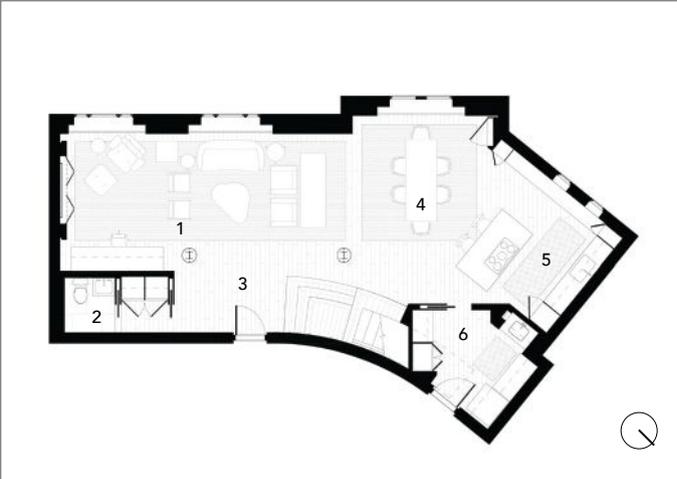


In the primary bath, the walnut veneer vanity and knife-edge granite surfacing harken to the great room’s appointments, while the marbled elements are a sumptuous large-format tile.

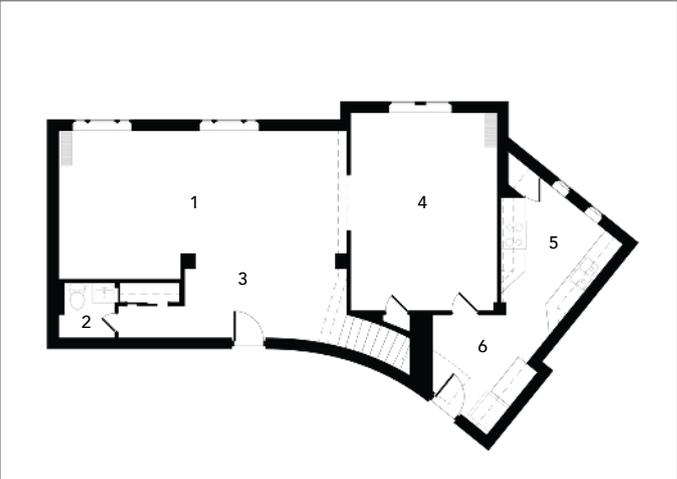
bases and column caps. We wanted to create some tie back to the original that was not too literal,” he explains. “The bases are on the first level of the apartment and the capitals on the second, alluding to how they work on the exterior of the building and at about the same scale.”

After a lifetime of designing multi-family buildings for others to occupy

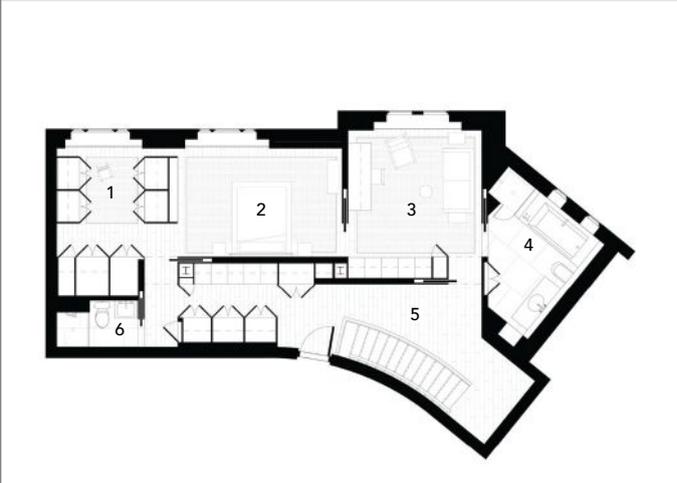
and a decade of planning for this one special unit, David and his wife are exactly where they want to be—in a beautiful oasis overlooking the vibrant city they love. “I’ve never worked so hard on 2,000 square feet,” he says. “You really sweat the details when you do modern, because there’s no place to hide. But the rigor lends a serenity.”—S. Claire Conroy



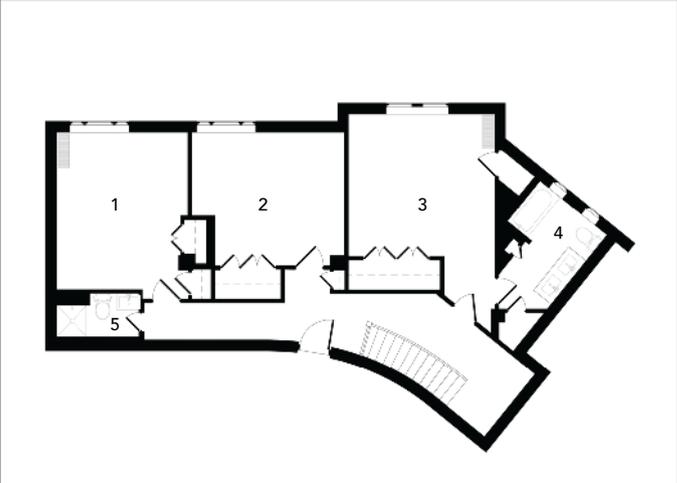
FIRST FLOOR PLAN | 1. Living Room | 2. Powder Room | 3. Foyer
4. Dining Room | 5. Kitchen | 6. Pantry



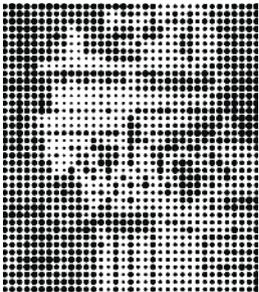
EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN | 1. Living Room | 2. Powder Room
3. Foyer | 4. Dining Room | 5. Kitchen | 6. Pantry



SECOND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Dressing | 2. Sleeping | 3. Office
4. Primary Bathroom | 5. Gallery | 6. Bathroom



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN | 1. Bedroom | 2. Bedroom
3. Primary Bedroom | 4. Primary Bathroom | 5. Bathroom



The period details of the building's interiors were largely lost in its first condo conversion, but David found inspiration for custom radiator grilles in the exterior's restored columns.

