

**Stockbridge-based architect
Pamela Sandler created her dream
house with a team of all-woman pros.**

A HOME OF ONE'S OWN

BY FRANCESCA OLSEN

You might think it's easy for an architect to design for herself—but Pam Sandler, who has been creating for clients in the Berkshires for more than 40 years, felt challenged by the process.

In her work, she looks deeply into people's lives, exploring their homes and striving to understand their routines and priorities in order to create a design that's harmonious with their lifestyle. But for her own project, "I couldn't be objective," she said. "It's difficult to look at your own life."

The effort she put in paid off. "I could feel the 'inner Pam' coming out. I was changing emotionally," she said. "This house is a bold design. It felt great that I could put myself out there."

Once a dated but charming mid-century house, Sandler's Great Barrington home base is now a peaceful, airy space that retains the original aesthetic. Sandler originally bought the little house with the intention to quickly remodel and sell it, but the 2008 recession changed her plans. She committed to the house and, eventually, to a full redesign and worked through renovations during the pandemic (which, of course, slowed down the process).



PHOTO: STEPHANIE ZOLLISHAN

Stairs are one of Sandler's favorite parts of a home—beautiful staircases set the scene for what visitors see next.





The renovated house is 1,700 square feet, up from the original 960 square feet. Sandler added large, expansive windows and opened up the floor plan, giving more light and flow to the space—the kitchen and dining areas are together, making for easy entertaining. She built in spaces to offer herself whimsy and delight throughout the day, like a special shelf in the kitchen for her collection of wind-up toys and a blue 1960s-style formica buffet from her childhood home.

“I wanted to bring it to another level of design,” Sandler said. “The original house had the classic midcentury qualities—beams, large overhangs, a low-pitched roof...I tried to complement what was there, but make it a much brighter, more inviting place.”



PHOTOS: STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN

Above: Architect Pamela Sandler in her completed living room, now part of an open-concept space that flows with the kitchen and dining areas. Formerly, the house was more closed off; now, the space is bathed in Berkshire light. Right: Some of Sandler's wind-up toy collection.



Before and after: Sandler purchased a dated midcentury home (above) with the intention to renovate and sell, but the space instead became a long-term abode (right) that retains the original charm while adding light, whimsy, and modern amenities.



PHOTOS: JOHN GRUEN

Sandler worked with interior designer Elena Letteron of Germain Interiors to create a happy central space for eating and relaxing. The mix of textures with wood tones—in the furniture and echoed in the room's wood ceiling beam—creates a clear callback to midcentury style, with cozy updates that evoke modern farmhouse living.





Sandler's light-filled sunroom. She also added a three-season porch and expansive deck so there are lots of opportunities to take in the views of nearby McAllister Wildlife Refuge.

Sandler also added a new primary bedroom, second bathroom, and laundry room; updated all the plumbing; and added a screened-in porch and a massive deck with a view of McAllister Wildlife Refuge. An early champion of green building techniques, she also added solar panels and an allergy-proof ventilation system, along with central air conditioning and heating efficiency upgrades.

"The house always had this amazing energy," Sandler said. "But now, when people walk in, they're like, 'can I just sit down? I feel so relaxed!' Getting home at night is like going on vacation. It's a total escape from the world." **B**



Above: Elena Letteron, Melissa O'Leary, Pam Sandler, and Susan Korte.

About 77 percent of architects in the U.S. are male. Sandler is one of just a few architects heading her own company in the Berkshires. "Women have a different take on design, and I'm told I work differently than other architects," she said. She didn't purposefully set out to put together an all-woman team—but when she enlisted the talents of people she wanted to collaborate with on her house, it just happened to turn out that way, for a beautiful result.

MEET THE TEAM

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