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Cliff Zinner moved the severely damaged 1905 Wesley A. Putney house from Bloodworth Street to South East Street in Raleigh's Historic Oakwood community.

PHOTOS BY DAVE LANGLEY

SAVING GRACE

BY IRIS JUNE VINEGAR
CORRESPONDENT

This is the story of two knights. But unlike the cavaliers who rescued young women in the Middle Ages, these contemporary Lancelots save old houses from destruction.

Builder Cliff Zinner, 47, and David Maurer, a 45-year-old architect, are from different parts of the country, but they have much in common. Both men are runners as well as friends; they have offices in century-old homes slated for demolition before they moved them from other historic districts; and each lives in a community listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Zinner, a native of Vestal, N.Y. and president of Raleigh-Durham Construction Company, moved the severely damaged 1905 Wes-

ley A. Putney house from Bloodworth Street to South East Street in Raleigh's Historic Oakwood community. Capital Area Preservation (CAP) had previously bought the unique two-story structure from the city for \$1 before it could be demolished. The non-profit organization then sold it for that price to Maurer's company, Maurer Architecture, with an easement stipulating that contemplated changes in the exterior design be approved by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission and CAP. Maurer, who designed the renovation, then sold the house to Zinner whose company renovated the structure to be used as its offices.

Zinner, a builder for 19 years, kept most of the original features in the Putney house, including baseboards, floors, windows and the staircase frame. But he replaced the weak stair treads and



Zinner kept most of the original features in the Putney house.

built a new roof and some new columns.

The builder also had to comply with preservation easements and the city handicap code. "We had to satisfy the historic people who want as little change as possible and the inspection people who

wanted the house to be handicap-accessible since it is being used as an office," recalls Zinner who also builds new houses, including the city's affordable redevelopment homes. "There is always a question of what is historic and what is just old," he notes, pointing out that renovating a historic home costs more than building a similar one from scratch.

But there are tax incentives for rescuing qualified (National Register) buildings like the Putney House. The federal government and North Carolina each offer a 20 percent tax credit on income-producing preservation projects. And though the federal government offers no tax credit for a non-income producing historic structure like a personal residence, the state offers a credit of 30 percent.



For commercial rehabilitation and preservation of the Putney House, Cliff Zinner, pictured, and David Maurer received Capital Area Preservation's 2005 Anthemion Award.

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SAVING

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For commercial rehabilitation and preservation of the Putney House, Zinner and Maurer received CAP's 2005 Anthemion Award. "The relocation of the Putney House preserved a locally rare example of a two-story frame Italianate-style dwelling that characterized a downtown Raleigh working/middle class neighborhood of the early 1900s," explains Gary Roth, CAP president and CEO. He notes that the many mismatched doors, windows, mantels and moldings in the historic house indicate it was constructed on a limited budget with salvaged materials.

Nine years ago, Maurer received another Anthemion Award along with Raleigh's Sir Walter Award for purchasing, moving and restoring the J.M. Norwood Italianate house. It now serves as his architectural office at 226 E. Martin Street. Maurer, a Virginia Beach native with bachelors and master's degrees in architecture, has renovated old houses since 1993 and is a consultant on saving historic buildings. In fact,

the former Oakwood resident now lives in a historic Boylan Heights home he renovated three times.

Some considerations that determine whether a building is salvageable, he says, include its architectural distinction and integrity (design), structure, uniqueness and site.

But the most fascinating aspect of historic renovation is, explains Maurer, "you start looking for signs of changes — what the original property was like." For example, his company is currently renovating the Masonic Hall building in Smithfield built in 1857 and subsequently moved twice. The structure featured stairs and doors that were taken from other buildings. "They were recycling even then," he notes.

Six years ago, Maurer started Tightlines Designs, a company that designs small, affordable new homes like The Foxgate, a three-bedroom 1,167 square-foot home costing \$118,000 (base price) to \$130,000 (with upgrades). Built twice in Raleigh's downtown community development area, The Foxgate was selected as a 2006 Home of the Month by The News and Observer in collaboration with the N.C. State College of Design.



David Maurer, left, received another Anthemion Award along with Raleigh's Sir Walter Award for purchasing, moving and restoring the J.M. Norwood Italianate house. He and his staff now use the home as architecture offices.



Cliff and Whitney Zinner's home on Iredell Street in Raleigh's Hayes Barton is a distinctive English Tudor style home among the colonials and Georgians common to the neighborhood.

But the architect also designs new luxury homes like Le Provence at the Reserve at Jordan Lake in Chapel Hill. The new 4,517-square-foot home, which cost \$725,425, won the 2004 Gold Parade of Homes award in its price range.

Maurer recently designed the renovation of Cliff and Whitney Zinner's striking 1920 home on Iredell Street in Hayes Barton, an early 20th century Raleigh suburban community in the National Register of Historic Places. The recently purchased brick English Tudor is distinctive on a street which includes stately Georgian and colonial revivals. Brooke Tate, Maurer's project manager for the Zinner home agrees. "It has a steep slate roof — you don't usually see a roof like that; it's not a Southern vernacular," she says.

Although the rear addition of the home built by Raleigh-Durham Construction actually doubled its size to 4,000 square feet, the front of the house is unchanged. "We wanted to make certain the addition was not visible from the street," Zinner explains. That addition includes an upstairs master suite because the couple believe their three children, ages 8, 7 and four weeks, are too

young to sleep upstairs alone.

The unique five-bedroom home, which also includes a guest room over the garage, mudroom, updated kitchen and large upstairs playroom, has many features that could not be replaced today, Zinner says. And even in the new section of the house, the couple added doors from old Tudor-style homes, copied the original moldings and chose windows that looked like the old ones but with superior insulation.

"We hoped the renovation would make a minimal impact on the neighborhood and look as if it has always been there," Maurer explains.

The Zinners never considered demolishing the old house even though it was not subject to a local appearance review. "While it was more expensive to remodel the home, it feels more productive to use the existing (house) versus creating more waste and using more raw materials to build a new one," Cliff Zinner explains. And furthermore, Whitney Zinner adds, "We prefer the character that older homes bring with them and we hate to destroy history if it has any value left."

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