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Parterres of boxwood and hornbeam, as well as cube-shaped linden trees, surround the bluestone courtyard. **Owner:** E. and J. of Inwood and Design partners at its end: the Bloomer Farms, the web house.

Main Line Estate Revived

Doyle Herman Design Associates bring seamless modernity to a traditional landscape, preserving the viewshed and complementing the house.

By Maggie Meahl

THE LUSH 11-ACRE GROUNDS of the former "Inwood," a grand old Philadelphia Main Line estate, recently received a substantial uplift by the internationally recognized design firm of Doyle Herman Design Associates. Nothing was overlooked in their clever enhancement of the wooded landscape and hardscape that surrounds the circa 1921 stone mansion. Both the homeowners and principal James Doyle agreed that the soothing vistas of open space and legacy trees were the mainstay of the iconic property but that new garden spaces for modern outdoor living, and a sculpture collection, were desirable.

When Doyle and lead designer Heather Harris

first arrived at the suburban property, the clients had already carefully renovated the classical house with the help of New York-based interior designer Victoria Hagan (with whom DHDA have worked before). But the outdoor spaces lacked organization and flow—something Doyle and Harris recognized.

The potential for transforming the old Main Line estate grounds was exciting. The goal would be to not only take advantage of the existing groves of mature hardwood trees, vistas, and sheer vastness of the property but also to "breathe new life into it." As Doyle explains, "I think they [the clients] realized that the landscape wasn't befitting such a fine house and

estate and so they turned it over to us. We strove to maintain open space. But it was really about organization and arrival. And, more intimate with the landscape."

According to Doyle, the design team literally started at the front gate. "There was no sense of procession to the property, so that is what we brought to it. We designed a new gate, restructured the tree-lined driveway, reconfigured the parking arrangement, and revamped the bluestone courtyard with more structured plant materials." The team, with the help of sensitive landscape contractors (and other professionals), elevated the edging around the arrival area by

using parterres of boxwood and hornbeam. A border of cube-shaped linden trees—a Doyle Herman signature mark—frames part of the stone square as well. Finally, the courtyard's water fountain was completely reinvigorated. As Harris points out, the sound of the water helps to mask the noise of cars coming through.

The classical-style house is very linear. This allowed Doyle and Harris to insert small sculpture gardens on either side of a glass breezeway that connects the garage to the house. These square spaces were created to highlight the clients' substantial art collection. Consequently, "As they walk from their garage all the way through the house to the pool area on the



Above The swimming pool area is surrounded by sculpted aerial hollybeam hedges that provide privacy and structure. **Top** Views of the broader landscape are available from across the courtyard. **Right** Spouts were created for outdoor sculptures. **Below** French-inspired cubed linden trees form an aisle on the back lawn. Herbaceous underplantings add shifts of color and texture.



other end, the views change dramatically from inside and out." This includes an important sight line from the large rear terrace to an original lawn and hardwood forest. Doyle added touches of color on the perimeter of the viewshed using plants such as azalea, rhododendron, dwarf chestnut, witch alder, and witch hazel.

The exceptional rear stone terrace serves many purposes. Whether for full-scale entertaining or just enjoying morning coffee, it's all about the appreciation of the serene view. Multiple seating areas and Belgian planters filled with shots of seasonal color adorn the oblong space. An outdoor kitchen was discreetly tucked into an alcove near the dining table. "We had the kitchen blend into the existing architecture so that if there is a large party, guests would have no clue it is there," explains Harris.

An inviting plateau garden spills out from the rear terrace. It is framed by two sets of French-inspired cubed linden trees, sheared hollybeam hedges, and balls of box. Colorful and fragrant mixed borders hug the base of terrace walls. Finally, a sculpture by Antony Gormley is centered on this rectangular green, creating an axis with the water fountain in front.

The swimming pool area, to the right of the plateau garden, is separated by sculpted aerial holly-



Above The dramatic view of the front courtyard of the classic Main Line estate. **Right** A bird's-eye view of the house and grounds. **Top** Right Shaped American holly trees, linden and holly as well as other established hardwoods line the revamped driveway.



beam hedges—very European. Herbaceous borders were used as underplantings and include grasses and salvias. On the opposite side of the pool is a new basal wall, designed by Harris. It serves as a backdrop for art sculpture as well as lending privacy from an adjacent property.

The Main Line estate project took roughly a year to complete from initial consultations with the clients to the last planting. The scope was large but attainable thanks to a great team of professionals and "a vast amount of coordination." By choosing Doyle Herman Design Associates, the clients could rest easy

that their needs for modern outdoor living would be met without sacrificing the existing views. In addition, the stately patina of the mansion certainly lent itself well to the formal green hedging that now dominates the property. Doyle Herman Design Associates honored their own design tenets by responding to the beauty of the architecture and land. In doing so, they helped the homeowners make the former Inwood their own. As Doyle says, "For me, client satisfaction is huge. These clients value the outdoors and the concept of design for their land. This is what the house deserves." **► FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 118.**