Preservation workshop focuses on historic districts

St. Petersburg architect describes challenges, benefits of designation.

Those who squeezed into the meeting room at the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach last week got an earful from guest speakers about the challenges involved in protecting houses of historical note from bulldozers—and ensuring that new construction doesn’t mar the longtime character of a neighborhood.

They listened to architect and town planner John Barre discuss the immense grassroots efforts he has helped lead in St. Petersburg to make it easier to create designated historical districts. The goal, he explained, is beyond the Hedges

Designer Spotlight

McCann Design Group is among firms taking part in the inaugural Kips Bay Palm Beach Show House, opening next week in West Palm Beach.

By CHRISTINE DAVIS

While the inaugural Kips Bay Palm Beach Show House makes its debut next week, it will bring together a team of interior designers who have worked their magic transforming rooms at a 1920s-era house near the Flagler Drive waterfront.

Affiliated with the longtime Kips Bay Show House in New York City, the fundraiser is filling a gap left by the demise of the American Red Cross Designers Show House, which folded after its sixth edition in 2016. The new show house will raise funds for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County, as well as the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club in New York City.

Seeking a prospect property for the project last year, Kips Bay organizers asked Concannon Group real estate agent Kim McCann for some ideas, and he suggested the historic Mediterranean-style Villa Belmonte, explains his designer wife, Sara McCann. She and her husband are longtime Palm Beach residents.

The owners of the house in the historic El Cid neighborhood agreed and Kips Bay organizers signed on. And Villa Belmonte at 180 Belmonte Road has lately become a “hone of activity,” says Sara McCann, who owns two Palm Beach-based businesses—HBF, her home furnishings and gift stores, and McCann Design Group, her interior design studio.

She and her team are among designers from more than a dozen firms taking part in the show house, which opens to the public on the Saturday after Thanksgiving for a month of tours.

In just a few short weeks, the property has undergone a transformation.

Among the participants at the soon-to-open Kips Bay Palm Beach Show House, McCann Design Group took a topical approach to the show half of a 1920s-era house near the Flagler Drive waterfront in West Palm Beach’s historic El Cid neighborhood. The design includes a seaweed mural, grape-rind wall covering and a custom brass lantern. The house opens to the public for tours Nov. 25.

Rendering courtesy McCann Design Group

Kips Bay Palm Beach Show House will offer tours of designer-decorated rooms at the 1920s-era house from Nov. 15 to Dec. 19. The fundraiser is filling a gap left by the demise of the American Red Cross Designers’ Show House, which folded in 2016.

Photo by CAPRISTATE

It’s amazing what a motivated group of designers can do in such a short time,” she said.

Villa Belmonte, like other Mediterranean homes of its time, features stucco walls, barrel-vaulted ceilings, exposed timbers, and decorative details of wrought iron and ceramic tile. Originally, it was a modest two-bedroom house, designed by architect Home Guy for Frank and Grace Daniels Hammett. Over the years, owners expanded it to a major renovation in the 1980s added a family room, garage, library and additional bedrooms and baths.

McCann and her design colleagues, Jessica Conne and Ashley Warren, have been busy dressing the two-story stair hall and the stairway’s upper landing, honing into the home’s lush gardens with mature coconut trees, tractor palms, banana trees and bougainvillea, then deciding what to bring the outside into their space.

“With the Outdoor Florida for inspiration,” McCann said. “Also, the home has pecky cypress elements throughout. In our area, we added dime-painted pecky cypress panels to enhance the home’s Mediterranean charm.

“When you received the assignment to decorate that space, it was just painted, and you couldn’t (discern the"

Please see SHOW HOUSE, Page R2

Photo by CAPRISTATE

Please see VARNEY, Page B3

YOUR FAMILY DECORATOR

Caroleen Varney

City by the bay—with bay windows

If you leave your heart in San Francisco? May be or maybe not, but lots of folks apparently have in this city by the bay. You'll find lots of things Titan and lots of things golden, including suirons over the Pacific and, of course, that famous bridge.

I always enjoy a visit to San Francisco, which has lots of places to visit. Right now, you'll find a terrific exhibit focused on the works of Gustav Klimt and Auguste Rodin at the Legion of Honor. Then, you might visit Fisherman's Wharf, where Alamo's still holds reign over the seafood restaurants. Of course, there is Nob Hill where the classic Scarls Hotel has gone mad, and with a lobby in a circular room.

The Stanford Court on the hill is getting a renovation, while the historic Fairmont and Mark Hopkins are known above the neighboring edifice.

Downtown's Palace Hotel still has its glass dome ceiling — must see — and the St. Francis Hotel on Union Square is a nice place to relax above the crowds in the park-like setting.

Architecturally, San Francisco is also a treat. It may be called the city by the bay, but to me that nickname might as much a reference to the tricolor abundant bay windows as it is to the water. Bay windows are everywhere — no surprise, really, in a city filled with row houses.

Some bay windows take a rectangular shape, others are rounded. But all beautiful. Bay windows in rooms give occupants side views up, and in San Francisco, that view is likely to be of a hill — up on one side and down on the other. Oh, San Francisco does have hills. I think of what the city would be like if snow and ice covered the ground in winter. Navigating those inclines would take a bit more effort, wouldn't you say?

I love bay windows for many reasons, and not just because they so nicely frame outdoor views. They also bring in plenty of natural light and give a room a sense of space.
Sara McCann and her design team’s projects often include a mix of casual and more formal furnishings, as in this room setting at HIVE. She says, “People are looking for a home that is comfortable, livable, fresh and of today.”

Sara McCann’s office at her HIVE home-furnishings boutique in West Palm Beach features one of her favorite colors. “Any chance I have to bring green in, I do,” she says.

SHOWHOUSE
From Page 81
architecture. The paneling shows off the vaulted ceiling and draws the eye up. We also added a sea-grape mural, some grasscloth wall covering and a custom brass lantern from Urban Electric with a coral-colored interior that is the same color as the sea-grapes’ veinning in the mural.”

On the landing, she and her team designed a reading nook with window seats. And on the stairs, they added a touch of blue with an animal-print runner.

While each room displays its designer’s own interpretation, McCann noticed a decorating trend that nods at the lush landscaping, which for years had hidden the house from the street. “What seems to be coming out is an appreciation for our tropical environment,” she says. “I am seeing rooms with bright colors and wall treatments that include a tropical-foliage motive. I was surprised, because I thought we would be the only ones.”

The use of such natural elements, she says, has enhanced the feel of the house and brought out its personality, she adds. That idea reflects the tastes of many of her clients with homes in the Northeast, as well as South Florida, she says. “They like their homes here to have a Florida sensibility,” she says. “They want their home to be light, airy, fresh and comfortable. They don’t want to replicate their northern home.”

Personally, McCann also likes bringing nature inside. “I find it soothing. Green is a favorite color of mine, and any chance I have to bring green in, I do. Using colors and materials found in nature makes a property cohesive.”

Not only is this Kips Bay’s first Palm Beach showhouse, but it also is McCann’s inaugural showhouse. On Monday, HIVE will celebrate its fourth anniversary — and the time seemed right to take on the showhouse project, she says. “We have a couple of years under our belt, and felt comfortable taking on the showhouse this year,” she explained.

“I’ve seen a couple of (previous) Kips Bay show houses, and they set the bar exceptionally well.” Helping out the Boys & Girls Clubs also appealed to her, she notes. Through HIVE, she has hosted or underwritten events for a number of local charities, she says. “We help out as many as we can, but charities that benefit children, families and women, we especially feel the need to support, appreciate and help them out,” she said.

McCann studied retailing at the University of Wisconsin and had taken a number of interior design courses to fulfill the requirements of her major. She worked for Neiman Marcus as an assistant buyer after graduating, ending up at the Palm Beach store on Worth Avenue. That’s where she met her husband. “We married 19 years ago, and we renovated our... Please see SHOWHOUSE, Page 83...