Choosing the Best Windows for the Job

Renovating any older house, whether or not it's located in a protected historic district, is key. Just how much do you give in to the homeowner's wishes when you know the balance is achieved, it can be very satisfying to all concerned.

Older homes add another challenge – their window openings aren't always all the same size. The idea of ordering custom windows might feel like throwing a lot of money away when you might just otherwise build the existing opening out enough to snug a standard sized window in. The truth is that your end result will be better achieved with an inch in any direction, as it will help preserve the desired external appearance.

There are some points to keep in mind when choosing custom windows:

- Exact right product (not the right product) for the job. Unlike a new home that takes a lot of forethought, careful planning, and suppliers that can help you get the right product, older homes may have unique characteristics that require a custom solution.
- Customer relations department within the company. The people you work with at an older home can help ensure that the windows you choose work well with the rest of your home.
- Quick delivery time and the ability to paint the exterior fiberglass. "Our use in saltwater locations like ours, they have a good price point, ease of specifying, and we can order fiberglass, so it makes sense," Lathrop said. "Our windows needed extra care that only custom solutions can offer. On the Blue House project, we knew we had to choose the right manufacturer who could adjust to our needs."

Choosing a new window manufacturer is not a decision to be taken lightly. Once Lathrop got final approval of the home's construction plans from the neighborhood association and the municipality, general contractor Signature Builders of Fairfield, Connecticut, with whom she is associated, was in place. She suggested that "if you're starting from scratch, it's really important to choose the right manufacturer who can adjust to your needs. We chose Integrity from Marvin Windows and Doors time and time again because of the quick delivery time and the ability to paint the exterior fiberglass. "Our use in saltwater locations like ours, they have a good price point, ease of specifying, and we can order fiberglass, so it makes sense," Lathrop said. "Our windows needed extra care that only custom solutions can offer. On the Blue House project, we knew we had to choose the right manufacturer who could adjust to our needs."

"It was somewhat of a challenge to bring a unique twist to the exterior without being too bold. We decided on the commercial grade black metal awnings as part of the graphic expression." We also introduced the commercial grade black metal awnings as part of the graphic expression. We chose the blue and black proportion and size of existing double hung windows. We suggested the blue and black window awnings and used white trim elements as a nod to the owner's graphic design background and sensibility. We also introduced the commercial grade black metal awnings as part of the graphic expression. We chose the blue and black proportion and size of existing double hung windows. We suggested the blue and black window awnings and used white trim elements as a nod to the owner's graphic design background and sensibility.

"Knowing what to add or take away is a skill that's vital to working with older homes or in renovating any older house, whether or not it's located in a protected historic district, is key. Just how much do you give in to the homeowner's wishes when you know the balance is achieved, it can be very satisfying to all concerned."

The owners of the home that would come to be known as Blue House presented Ann Lathrop and her firm, Sellars Lathrop Architects (SLA), of Fairfield, Connecticut, with a whole new set of challenges. They were looking for a house that was to be modern with the old, the indoors with the beautiful park-like space outside.