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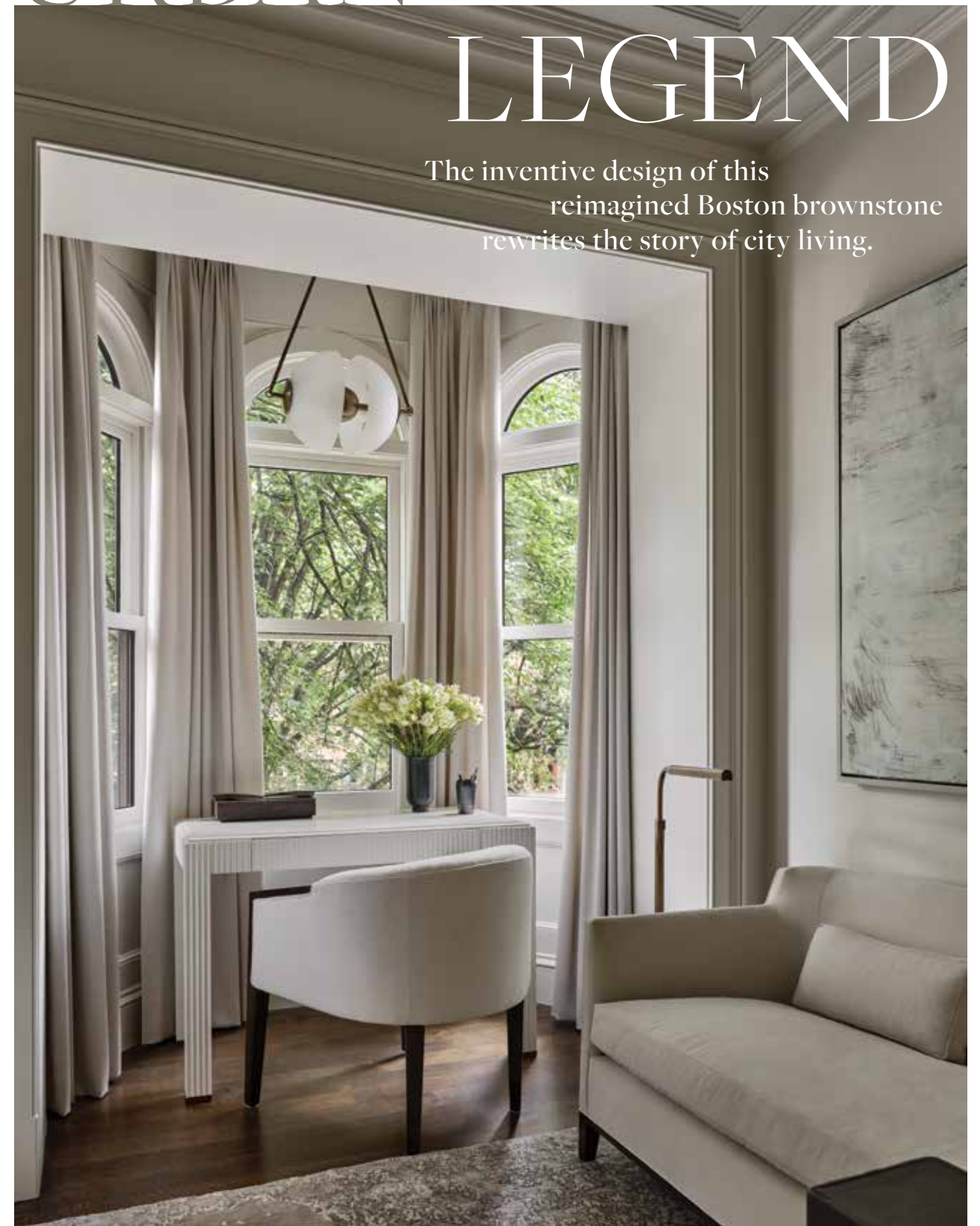
Time-honored designs, reimagined



Farrow & Ball's silvery Light Blue softens the library's sturdy millwork and imbues the room with an inviting tranquility. **FACING PAGE:** The homeowner treasures her study, tucked into a bow window in a sitting room off the primary bedroom and luxuriously outfitted with a wool and silk rug from Steven King Decorative Carpets, plush seating, and a custom-sized leather-wrapped table with fluted leg details.

URBAN LEGEND

The inventive design of this
reimagined Boston brownstone
rewrites the story of city living.



Text by PAULA M. BODAH | *Photography by* READ MCKENDREE/JBSA | *Styled by* KATJA GREEFF

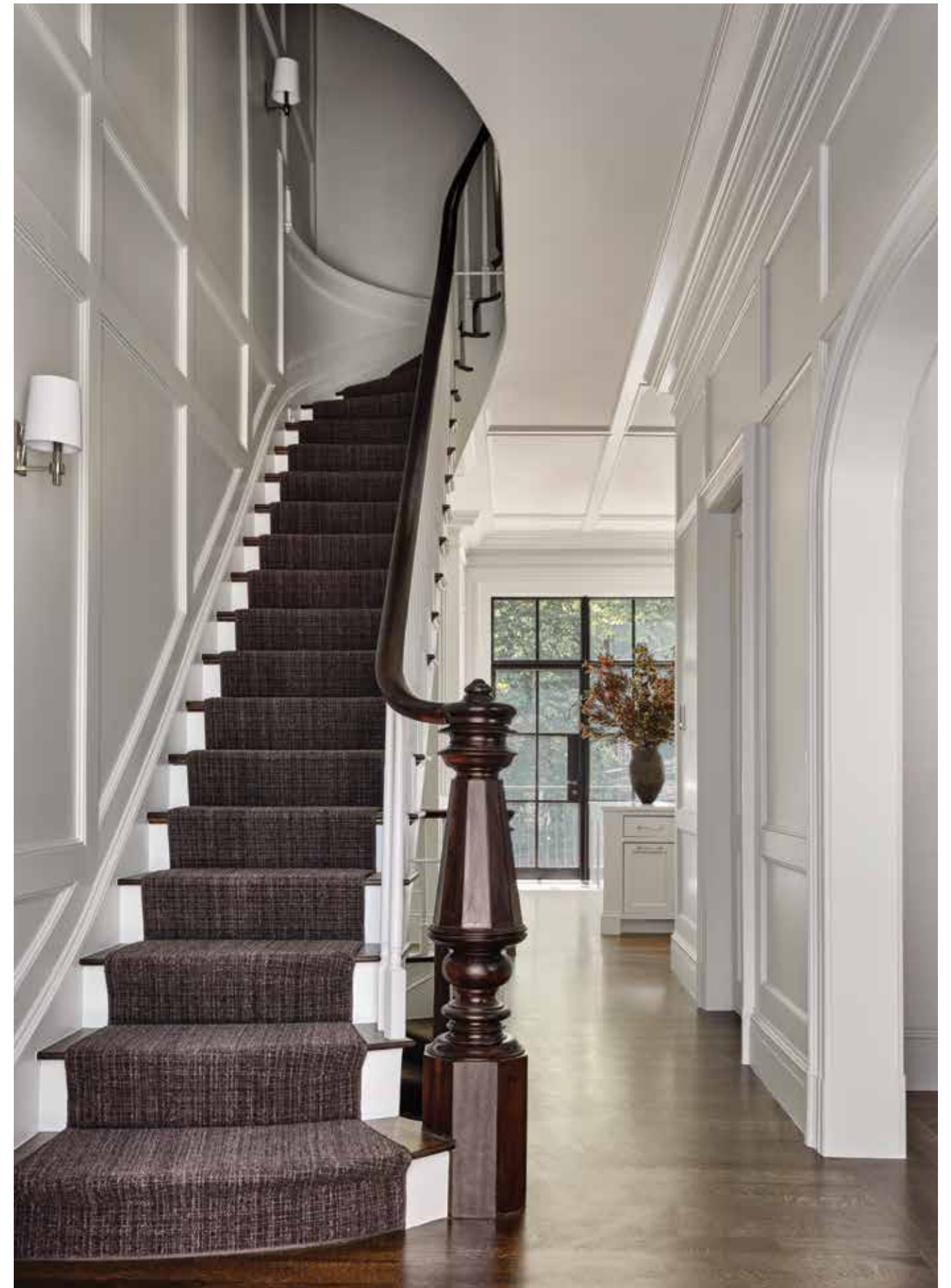
Boston's South End is a study in contrasts. Its leafy streets are lined with stately nineteenth-century brownstones that recall an earlier era, but behind those traditional facades are people living thoroughly modern lives. For one such couple, a historic Union Park home offered everything they loved about city living, with one small caveat: it needed to function for a twenty-first-century family.



ABOVE: A powder room is tucked away in the vestibule that separates the kitchen and dining room. **LEFT:** The six-story brownstone presents a classic facade; inside, private spaces occupy the garden level and the three top floors, while public spaces—the living room, library, kitchen, and dining room—sit on the second and third levels. **FACING PAGE:** The rebuilt staircase has a new balustrade in dark wood for dramatic contrast with the white walls; designer Lisa Tharp chose a dark stair runner to enhance the contrast.

“From the start, the goal was to respect the historic architecture while ushering it gracefully into the present day,” says designer Lisa Tharp, who collaborated with architect Robert Paladino, builder Joseph Holland, and landscape architect Douglas Jones. “They lead very busy work lives and have small children. They wanted an oasis that feels calm and embracing.”

That oasis came by way of some bold architectural moves—most dramatically, three expansive walls of glass that overlook a courtyard. “The glass is really what makes this project exceptional,” says Paladino. “These are long, linear buildings with light only in the front and back. The glass walls on three levels bring so much light into the spaces.”





The street-level living room's window wall fosters a connection to the outdoors. Tharp kept the palette quiet to highlight the courtyard view and chose low-profile furniture with gentle curves, including a room-width sofa outfitted in Romo's Forenza cotton velvet and slipper chairs and chaises surrounding a custom plaster coffee table that nods to designer Milo Baughman.

The spacious kitchen is a cook's dream, with storage and counter space galore and bountiful light flooding in through the window wall. **FACING PAGE:** The sophisticated dining room is drenched in silver, from the Phillip Jeffries silver-on-white hemp wallpaper to the silk Jim Thompson drapery fabric, to the trim color, called Fluting, from Lisa Tharp's own collection for ECOS Paints.



Of course, replacing a chunk of nineteenth-century brickwork with glass isn't for the faint of heart. "We had to remove the entire rear wall, shore up the foundation with helical piles, and build a new steel frame that meets today's seismic codes," Holland explains. "It was literally taken down to the brick shell except for the staircase. Logistically, it was a challenge, but this has become something of a specialty for us."

With the heavy lifting complete, Tharp could do what she does best: infuse each room with a sense of serenity, balance, and just enough whimsy to keep things from being too precious. "The envelope was restored in a very classical manner," she says. "Then we layered in furnishings with soft curves and rounded corners, pieces that feel timeless, but also cozy and approachable."

Take the library, where a silvery-blue paint





envelops beefy millwork. Or the dining room, where silk drapery, a shimmering chandelier with Murano glass shades, and a herringbone-patterned floor inlaid with brass give the room a big dose of drama. In the living room, an airy palette invites interaction with the courtyard, while a vintage midcentury painting above the broad sofa anchors the space and adds just enough color to echo the play of light bouncing off South End brick.

“The furnishings aren’t traditional, but the architecture is,” Paladino points out. “That juxtaposition creates a rhythm. You move through rooms that each have their own scale and character, but the whole house feels cohesive, intentional.”

That cohesion extends outdoors, thanks to Jones’s restrained landscape plan. A limited palette of maples, potted hydrangeas, and planters filled with Hakone grass frames the courtyard, which



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The home’s fourth level is devoted to the primary suite, where the bedroom is enveloped in a warm rosy hue and illuminated by a vintage 1960s Austrian tulipan chandelier. A child’s bedroom in periwinkle is both playful and sophisticated. The primary bath is a study in white; the chair has feet of polished nickel to echo the cabinetry’s hardware. **FACING PAGE:** A window seat makes a cozy spot for reading or a nap in the top-level family room.



“It models how you can honor historic architecture and still make it work beautifully for a young family.”

—Interior designer Lisa Tharp

Indoors and out blend seamlessly in the garden-level lounge and courtyard, where low sofas, lounge chairs, and ottomans in neutral shades mirror each other; the brick building across the courtyard is the new carriage house.

FACING PAGE: Landscape architect Douglas Jones kept plantings simple, with grasses, a Japanese maple, and potted hydrangeas.



abuts a new brick carriage house/garage complete with a private roof-deck. “It’s a very urban garden, so the planters are like furnishings,” Jones says. “By keeping it simple, we created a calm backdrop. Without it, the family would be staring at fire escapes and utility lines. Instead, they’re looking at serenity.”

And serenity is exactly what this young family needed. Upstairs, the pale pink primary bedroom glows warmly in evening light, while the children’s rooms strike a note between playful and sophisticated. On the garden level, modular furnishings make the lounge a chameleon—one night a cocktail spot, the next morning a playroom.

After two years of construction, what was once a

dark brownstone is now a home that blends history and modern life in equal measure. “It models how you can honor historic architecture and still make it work beautifully for a young family,” says Tharp.

Or, to put it another way: this old brownstone may wear a classical face, but inside it’s humming happily to the rhythm of today.

EDITOR’S NOTE: For details, see Resources.

ARCHITECTURE: Mellows & Paladino Architects

INTERIOR DESIGN: Lisa Tharp Design

BUILDER: The Holland Companies

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: LeBlanc Jones Landscape Architects

