

# A BOSTON BROWNSTONE REIMAGINED AS A LIGHT-FILLED FAMILY HAVEN

In Boston's Union Park, a 1900 brownstone is reworked into a serene, modern home for contemporary family life

By **Olivia Vergunst** | February 16, 2026 | **House Tours**



Historic bones meet modern calm in this six-level Boston home shaped by light, craft and quiet elegance

Surrounded by historic façades and leafy streets, a 1900 Boston brownstone has been thoughtfully transformed into a calm, contemporary retreat for a young family. Set in Union Park — one of New England's most beautifully preserved residential squares — the six-level home balances architectural heritage with a fresh, light-filled interior language. From street level to rooftop, the spaces feel grounded, serene and quietly confident, shaped by natural textures, sculptural forms and an enduring sense of craft.

The home sits within Union Park’s graceful elliptical square, framed by mature trees, fountains and its original cast-iron fence. This historic context guided the project from the outset. Characterised by distinctive bow-window façades, the brownstone was originally designed to draw daylight deep into its interiors — a quality that became central to the redesign. The palette takes its cue directly from the surroundings, inspired by what Lisa Tharp, founder and principal of Lisa Tharp Design, describes as the “leafy green and warm violet rusty brick views” of the neighbourhood.



The restored bow-window façade honours 1900 architecture within Union Park’s leafy, historic square

Working closely with the architect, builder and landscape architect, Lisa Tharp led the interior design across both the envelope and the home’s outdoor spaces, overseeing space planning, millwork, cabinetry and lighting. She describes the result as “a historic home that provides artistic inspiration, comfort and ease for a 21st century young family.” Achieved over three years of careful planning and execution, the project offers an elegant balance between past and present — refined, luminous and deeply connected to everyday life.



Historic structure meets contemporary calm in a light-filled interior shaped by craft and proportion

Designed for a family with three young children, the brief called for a home that could hold elegance and ease in equal measure. Each of the six connected levels was reorganised to support a distinct rhythm, allowing different activities and moods to unfold throughout the day. Despite this layered approach, the house feels cohesive, unified by tone, craftsmanship and a consistent sense of calm.



Six connected levels unfold with intention, balancing family rhythm with architectural grace

Throughout the interiors, Lisa Tharp employed soft natural colours with minimal contrast between walls, millwork, window treatments and furnishings, creating visual continuity and a restful atmosphere. Textural depth comes from silks, wools, natural fibres and subtle, classic patterns used in fabrics and wall coverings. The effect is tactile yet restrained — a quiet backdrop for family life.



Soft natural tones and layered textures create a serene backdrop for daily family life

Lisa Tharp’s design approach is shaped by “the architecture, the surroundings, and the clients themselves,” and in this home, those influences converge seamlessly. “The architecture demanded respect for vertical proportions and front-to-rear sight lines,” she explains. Restored vintage pieces sit alongside contemporary furnishings and lighting, while window seats were introduced to capitalise on bow windows and treetop views. The colour palette reflects the neighbourhood itself, and furniture silhouettes are “streamlined and softly curved for calm while remaining classic enough to fit a historic envelope.”



Curved silhouettes and restored vintage pieces respect heritage while introducing modern ease

Natural light plays a defining role. “Traditionally, city brownstones suffer from a lack of natural light due to solid long walls on either side,” says Tharp. To address this, the entire rear façades of the three public floors were replaced with full-height glass walls. “The house is now flooded with abundant sunshine while still maintaining privacy at the park-facing front facade — all without compromising the architectural legacy of this historic residence.” A new kitchen balcony and garden courtyard further extend the living spaces outdoors.



Full-height glass walls flood the rear façade with sunlight, opening interiors to garden views

The dining room, overlooking the park through curved historic windows, exemplifies the home's layered aesthetic. A warm-toned Murano chandelier in walnut-hued glass illuminates the space, offset by a Brutalist painting, silk-clad walls and brass-inlaid herringbone floors. It is a room that feels timeless yet modern, formal yet welcoming.



A Murano chandelier glows above silk walls and brass-inlaid floors in the park-facing dining room

Reached via a softly curved vestibule, the kitchen is bright and open, defined by clean lines, tailored millwork and a gentle palette. Glass doors open onto a balcony above the courtyard, supporting daily rituals from morning coffee to family meals. Nearby, the library and living room overlook the rear garden, with an entire wall of glass connecting the interiors to a carriage house and a private roof deck above.



Clean-lined kitchen opens to a balcony, blending tailored millwork with indoor–outdoor living

The garden level is designed for both hosting and play, incorporating a guest suite and a generous lounge that doubles as an entertainment space. Glass doors open fully to the outdoors, prompting Lisa Tharp to describe it as “indoor/outdoor living at its finest within the confines of a busy city neighbourhood.”

At the top of the house, a lounge with a room-length window seat offers skyline views and has become a favourite family gathering spot, particularly at dusk. “The flexible seating plan easily rearranges to suit a variety of activities,” says Tharp, with restored Milo Baughman chairs swivelling between conversation, television and views.



A top-floor lounge with window seat and skyline views becomes a favourite family retreat

Private areas on the upper floors continue the home's soft, neutral language. Bedrooms are shaped by architectural curves, diffused daylight and carefully proportioned furnishings. In the main bedroom, "a rare extra-large Tulipan chandelier (1960s Austria) catches the light," Tharp notes, while an analogous palette of warm pinks and camels brings a sense of tranquillity.



In the main bedroom, soft pinks, camel tones and a vintage chandelier create quiet luxury

Ultimately, this Boston brownstone is a study in balance — where history and modernity coexist with ease, and where thoughtful design supports the rhythms of contemporary family life. Calm, considered and deeply rooted in its place, the home stands as a quietly confident reinterpretation of a classic urban dwelling.

### Credits

Interior design: **Lisa Tharp Design**, Instagram: @lisa\_tharp

Architecture: Mellows & Paladino Architects

Renovation: The Holland Companies

Landscape: LeBlanc Jones Landscape Architects

Photos: Read McKendree, Instagram: @readmckendree

Styling: Katja Greeff, Instagram: @katjagreeff

Production: Karine Monié, Instagram: @karinemonie