

CURB APPEAL

# Cottage Revivals

Exterior overhauls and pretty plantings help two Birmingham-area homes dial up the charm just in time for spring

BY CAMERON BEALL

Before



**Brought to Light**  
Sun-seeking updates and white paint transformed this Homewood gem.

NO.

1

**A QUEST FOR MORE** sunshine guided each step in this top-to-bottom makeover. “The homeowner is an artist and really wanted a light-filled space, so we decided to turn the front room into her studio and added an inviting bay window to filter the rays,” says Leigh Misso, owner of River Brook Design & Construction in Birmingham. To brighten up the attic-like second floor, the full-service design-build firm renovated and remodeled it to create two bedrooms and one bath for the homeowners’ children, inspiring exterior improvements to match. “The dormers allow more light to come in upstairs and balance the facade, and the additional windows pull the eye up to the roofline,” says Misso.

With all the structural changes in place, they focused on boosting the curb appeal, which included updating the front entry with a walnut-stained, three-quarter-light door and custom shutters on either side. “We recommend that shutters be functional so they’re scaled properly,” explains the designer. Reconfigured landscaping opened up the patio, transforming it into a welcoming spot to sit and relax. Manicured boxwoods planted along the garden beds help provide shape while potted ones in the corners soften the look. Arborvitae flank the house to add height. “We used small ‘Limelight’ hydrangeas by the bay window,” notes Misso of the final flourish. “They offer a flowering element that doesn’t obscure the view.”

#### Classic Contrast

The black shingles on the roof pop against the freshly painted siding and brick (in Benjamin Moore’s White Dove, OC-17) and shutters (in Benjamin Moore’s Pale Oak, OC-20).



#### PRIORITIZE THE STATEMENT MAKERS

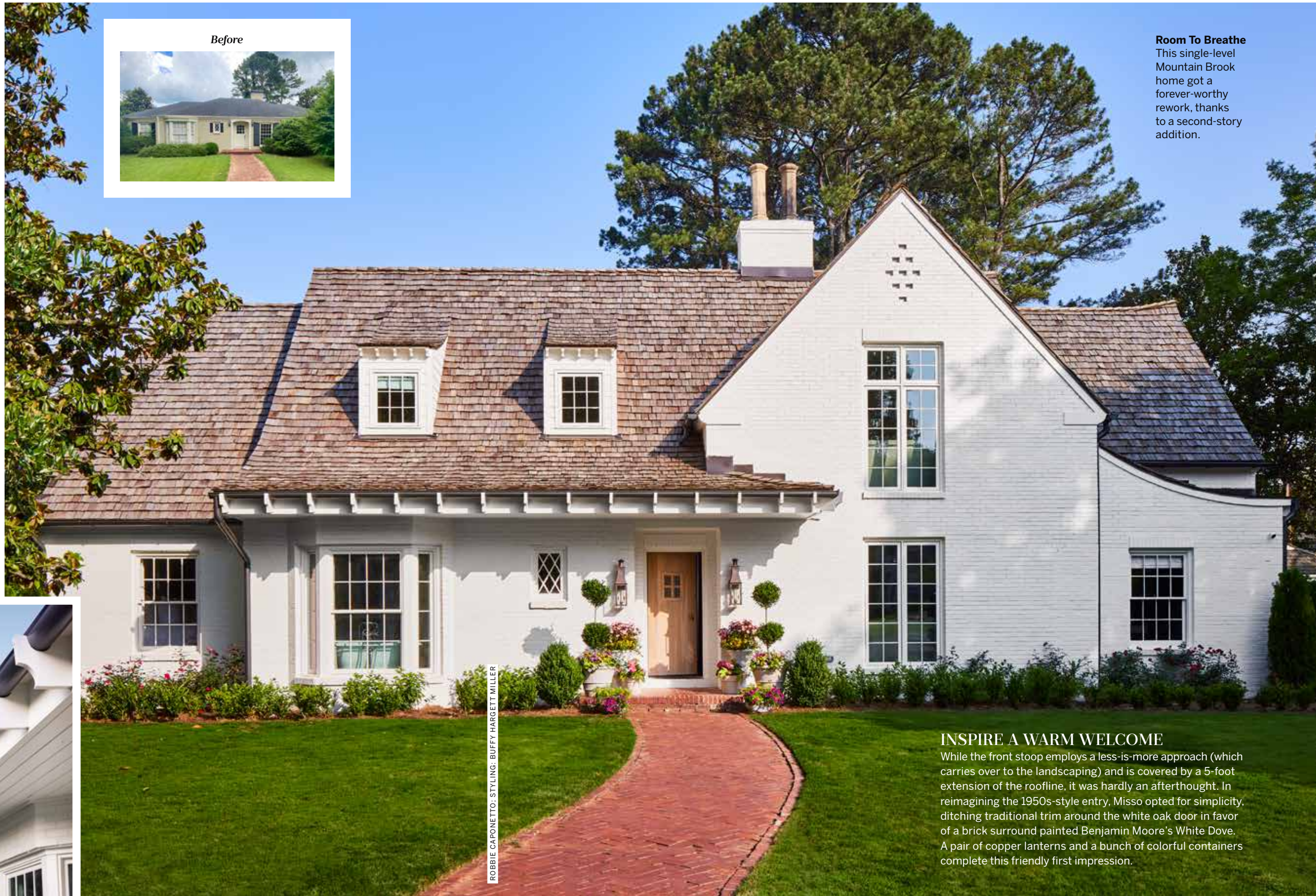
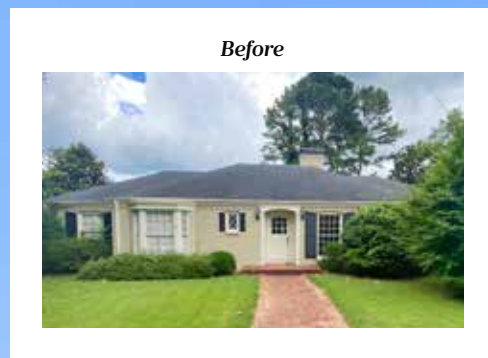
“We always lean toward using honest materials, like copper. We love how you see its patina, which brings a level of elegance to the home,” says Misso. While all-copper everything might have been the preferred route, it is expensive, so the homeowners chose to splurge on the features that would have the most impact—the gas lantern and the bay window’s awning—and stuck to a more budget-friendly option for the gutters.

NO. 2

**A YOUNG FAMILY** approached Misso and her team with a tall order: Grow their 1,999-square-foot brick house by another 2,500 square feet—without losing its cottage feel. The first step? Raising the roof. A cedar-shake one with dormers on one end and a front gable on the other keeps the second story from making the house seem enormous—while still comfortably accommodating three bedrooms, two baths, and space to play and do laundry. “The homeowners loved swooping rooflines, so we curved the edges of the main roof and mimicked that shape on the dormers,” says Misso of the flared ends that, along with the antique chimney pots, lend the exterior a dose of English charm. On the end with the front gable, the designer stacked two floor-to-ceiling windows to give the illusion of a single continuous one and to flood the interior with ample natural light.

**A Closer Look**

The rafter tails were made to draw the eye while also serving a function. “We detailed them with cutouts so the gutter can nestle into the grooves without covering up the design,” says Misso.



**Room To Breathe**

This single-level Mountain Brook home got a forever-worthy rework, thanks to a second-story addition.

**INSPIRE A WARM WELCOME**

While the front stoop employs a less-is-more approach (which carries over to the landscaping) and is covered by a 5-foot extension of the roofline, it was hardly an afterthought. In reimagining the 1950s-style entry, Misso opted for simplicity, ditching traditional trim around the white oak door in favor of a brick surround painted Benjamin Moore’s White Dove. A pair of copper lanterns and a bunch of colorful containers complete this friendly first impression.

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