

Re-do brightens a Mediterranean-style townhome

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REAL-ESTATE

Alex Hufty Griswold's renovation lightened up a Mediterranean-style townhome in Palm Beach

Homeowner says his goal was to peel away the excess “ornamentation and formality” of his villa, which is priced at just under \$15 million at 161 Main St.

Christine Davis

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Alex Hufty Griswold completely reimagined his ocean-block townhouse villa — just north of The Breakers resort — through an up-to-the-moment update.

When Griswold purchased the semi-detached villa at 161 Main St. in 2020, its architecture was “heavy Mediterranean,” Griswold says, “and I wanted to make it more of a beach house, so we peeled back a lot of its ornamentation and formality.”

The renovation accomplished all his goals, he says, but the time has come to pass the house on to someone else. The four-bedroom, 5½-bath villa — with 4,931 square feet of living space, inside and out, is listed for sale with Nolen Doorack, an agent with Flagship Co. in West Palm Beach. With a private pool, the townhome is priced at \$14.95 million, and the furniture is available through separate negotiations.

“It’s a lot of house for me,” Griswold says about why he has decided to part with the villa, which is part of a duplex. “I came from the north end of the island, and I am planning to move back.”

A commercial real estate investor, Griswold has deep family roots in Palm Beach. He grew up on the island and attended kindergarten through ninth grade at Palm Beach Day School, which is today Palm Beach Day Academy. Griswold is a member of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, a board on which his mother, artist Page Lee Hufty, has also served.

Griswold’s villa, which was built in 2000, “was relatively new construction,” he says, but it needed “a lot of cosmetic work to bring it to today’s style and make it more livable and casual.”

His renovations were fairly extensive and included laying new wood floors in some rooms and refinishing the stone ones in others. He also gutted the kitchen and installed all new mechanical systems.

The house has an exterior courtyard entry. Inside the front door, the foyer connects to a gallery that directs foot traffic to the north. The living room is to one side, with the dining room and kitchen — as well as the stair hall and elevator — on the other.

Immediately west of the foyer are the library, a new wet bar and a powder room. On the mid-level are two bedroom suites, while the upper level is home to the main suite, the family room and a guest-bedroom suite.

On the lowest level, the garage accommodates two cars.

Griswold focused on highlighting the interior details. In the foyer, the walls are clad in coral keystone, and the floors are covered in tiles of refinished, tumbled marble.

Features in the living room include a beamed ceiling and a gas fireplace with a stone mantelpiece. On one wall, a bank of French doors accesses the loggia, which faces a new saltwater pool and re-landscaped yard.

In the dining room, arched openings frame the staircase, while arched windows overlook the front courtyard. The ceiling is topped with an oval cove ceiling. "We removed crown molding and painted the room white to make it more casual," Griswold says.

Griswold worked closely with interior designer David Phoenix, who has a studio in Palm Beach, on the design of the kitchen. With professional-grade Sub-Zero and Viking appliances, the kitchen has white custom cabinetry, and the counters and backsplashes are made of a marble named "Taj Mahal." The center work island, which accommodates seating, has a mahogany-finished base. Underfoot are new whitewashed oak floors.

"Two walls are covered in handmade clay tile," Griswold adds.

The butler's pantry, he says, has a second refrigerator and dishwasher. There are also a washer and dryer in this area.

In the library, crews lacquered the walls and cabinetry green and installed sisal wallpaper within the coffers of the ceiling. Two arched windows offer views of a pocket garden with a private seating area. The new floors are whitewashed oak set in a herringbone pattern, the same as in the main bedroom upstairs.

A focal point of the main bedroom is its coral-keystone-clad fireplace, and an adjoining sitting room overlooks the pool area. The suite comprises two walk-in closets and two bathrooms, one with a shower and the other with a soaking tub.

The top-floor guest bedroom accesses a pool-view balcony. The family room is crowned by a vaulted pitched ceiling and accesses a balcony and a covered terrace that views The Breakers' golf course.

"For me, what's interesting about this townhome (is that) it's not fully attached to its neighbor, so it's like a single-family home," Griswold said.

He says he will miss being so close to The Breakers and the Royal Poinciana Way commercial district.

"I can walk to The Breakers," he says. "Townhouse owners buy them because they are in (the heart of) town, and they understand the value of walking to dinner and shops. But my friends are in the North End, which is why I'm seeking to move there."

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For more than 20 years, Christine Davis has written about Palm Beach real estate in the "On the Market" feature in the Palm Beach Daily News.