

## 2015 Griffin Award Nomination - 82 Westwood Place, Asheville NC 28806

### Project Description

Seven Oaks, or the Historic Atkinson House, is a beloved West Asheville landmark on Westwood Place. Built between 1860 and the late 1870's, the double brick, Italianate-style house is unusual for the neighborhood. Since the 1940's, the house has been owned and cared for by the Bennett family. During the past decade, the house has seen remarkable decline. It had become a neighborhood drug house, which fell into disrepair and was eventually condemned. The home sat vacant and boarded up for a year before it went into pre-foreclosure and the Bennett family sold to the current owners, next-door neighbors Rob and Caroline Rodier.

Restoration began by securing the house, boarding up missing basement doors and windows, and installing security cameras and alarm systems. Break-ins by former squatters continued to happen in the early months. The Rodiers retained general contractor Joe Curro for the restoration. Curro and his two-man team set to work repairing the foundation.

Inside, one interior ceiling had fallen many years ago and was never replaced. The missing ceiling provided easy access to the attic, where additional structural problems were found. The front section of the facade was leaning 10 degrees and needed to be re-supported and pushed back in place. After the repair, the missing bedroom ceiling was replaced with drywall. Several other hallway ceilings and an additional bedroom ceiling were also replaced because the plaster was in such poor condition. All metal in the house, including plumbing, sewer pipes, light fixtures and HVAC had been removed by looters. The renovation included two new heating systems, all new plumbing and electrical, and a new roof. Gutters on the front of the house were reused and new gutters were added on the back. All original windows were repaired. Original glass in windows on the north side of the house were removed and moved to the east side, which more prominently faces the road. Mortar was repointed in areas where it was failing. The home has five fireplaces and five chimneys, all needing repair. Chimneys were capped and dampers installed.

Curro and the owners worked to create a new floor plan, which would add functionality to the house that had for many years been divided into two separate living spaces. The smaller living quarters, called "the apartment" by the Bennett family had been used by their young adult children as a temporary home until they could save enough money to purchase their own homes. The home's two kitchens were remodeled. The two bathrooms, one which had been gutted years before and another whose floor was completely rotted out, were both gutted and remodeled. Original wood floors in the home were refinished, with the exception of the following: the carpet in the main hallway was removed and replaced with hardwood floors; the sunken bedroom floor was extended with new hardwood; and the kitchen floors, which were water damaged beyond repair, were replaced with new hardwood. The exterior porches (2) were removed and replaced. The sunken bedroom's brick exterior wall was removed, extended, and replaced with a glass wall for a three-season porch. The front, middle door, which was damaged beyond repair, was replaced with an extra interior wood door found in the house.

All interior walls were plaster with many coats of wallpaper. The homeowners removed all wallpaper and the contractor repaired all plaster over double-brick walls. All original millwork was existing in the house, with the exception of some minor interior door moldings, which were rebuilt to match. Existing door knobs were left in place, including a set of 1870's locks on the front-left living room (separating the "apartment" from the main living area).

Paint colors, light fixtures, landscaping, and bath and kitchen design were provided by the homeowners. Joe Curro provided consultation for design and all other services with assistance from plumbing, electrical and HVAC subcontractors.

A Neighborhood Open House was held on Jan. 10, 2015 with at least 100 people in attendance. An application for National Historic Register status and Part 1 Federal Tax Credits have been submitted. The owners are in the process of establishing a bed and breakfast on the property.