



## Wells House Amherst, MA

Peter and Terri Wells have grown children and a desire for greater comfort that their 160 year-old brick house could not provide them in their advancing years. For them, their historic house's charms were being progressively eroded by the challenges; small awkwardly arranged rooms, steps between levels, cold floors, winter drafts, limited light and sun penetration, limited indoor-outdoor connections and, most of all, a magnificent vista to the southeast that was just out of reach. Increasingly, they saw their dream house as the conversion of their dilapidated barn. So they divided the property and sold the house. With the proceeds they took on the task of creating a house that retained the rustic historic character of the barn's interior, while making it comfortable, accessible, sun and light-filled, with a flowing connection to decks and terraces and, most of all, oriented to the southeast vista of the Holyoke Range.



There was a strong incentive to locate the main bedroom and principal living spaces in the upper level of the barn, in full view, and in the presence of the formidable timber framing structural elements. The supplementary bedroom, living and utility spaces are on the floor below. The upper portion of the existing barn building was lifted (by crane) and put aside, leaving the lower 7' of framing, which was distressed and degraded by animals and moisture, behind. In the original location, a new insulated foundation structure was constructed into the sloping site. The existing barn structure was rotated, replaced and enlarged with a "shed" addition extending toward the street. The west entry side, with grading to the upper level and the shed-addition roof descending, creates a welcoming façade of intimate scale.

The entire original timber frame barn structure was completely enclosed using structural insulated panels (SIP's). These elements, prefabricated and installed in days by specialist subcontractors, create an airtight, uniformly well insulated building structure. Much of the interior finishes (floors, wainscot, furniture, countertops, etc.) is reclaimed wood, either from the original barn or other similar salvaged structures in the locale. This contrasts with veneer plastered walls with integral color, and stained/sealed/waxed finished concrete floors at the lower level.

