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Generating Positivity

A kitchen and main bathroom shed their dark, cramped appearance in favor of layers of light

AFTER MANY YEARS in their Alexandria, Va., home, a family decided to deal with one of its major pain points – the home’s inefficient kitchen. Working with Michael Winn, president, Falls Church, Va.-based Winn Design + Build, they commissioned a larger kitchen and updated the main bathroom while they were at it. Not only did the renovation result in enhanced well-being for the homeowners – thanks to more natural light and access to the outdoors – the project was also completed with special attention to air quality because of a family member’s sensitivity.

The original kitchen was a far cry from the light, airy and functional space of today. A load-bearing wall spanning three-quarters of the kitchen width in the middle of the room separated the main cooking and workspace from storage and the microwave. Added to the cramped layout, the style was depressing and dated with dark oak cabinets, speckled black granite countertops and green walls.

“It was an interesting space, and it was a source of a lot of frustration to the homeowners,” said Winn. “They wanted an open kitchen with a brighter palette.”

Upstairs, the main bathroom was not any more welcoming. Opening the door bumped the toilet, and a giant whirlpool tub surrounded by mirrors took up most of the space. Winn would need to improve the layout and the look there, too.

CREATING A CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

The family remained in the home during the renovation, and the design team was required to create a comprehensive dust containment system

ABOVE Multiple large windows allow natural light to fill the now spacious kitchen.

BELOW Layered lighting and lighter finishes and fixtures bring a bright, open look to this transitional kitchen.

By **CARRIE WHITNEY**



because one of the children has a compromised immune system and is highly sensitive to air-borne particulates.

To prepare for construction, the team created an air-sealed partition, closed off mechanical systems and depressurized the work area, so dust would not blow into the house. Temporary commercial-size HEPA filters were set up in the workspace, and additional filtration was added to all air supply and return units throughout the home – those were removed after the project was completed.

“Some of that we do as a matter of practice,” said Winn. “Always when doing a renovation to



an existing house where not everything is being updated, we try to contain the chaos.”

But adding the HEPA filters was new. Although setting up for the project took a bit longer, the mitigation strategies did not affect the overall process, and the level of diligence saved some time on the backend when the untouched areas of the house did not need a thorough cleaning.

Downstairs in the kitchen, access to the construction site was easy because it opened to the backyard. However, the upstairs bathroom was also carefully partitioned, and in that case, the team set up a scaffolding and opened the window to provide an elevated entry point.

LIGHTING UP THE KITCHEN

In the heart of the home, the central wall was removed, along with the corner of the house so the space could be expanded rearward, adding a breakfast area. To replace the supporting wall, Winn installed two steel I-beams. He added several windows and glass doors, replacing two smaller windows, some glass blocks and a Dutch door that had been the only sources of light.

ABOVE Removing a whirlpool tub with a deck created plenty of space for a spa-like, freestanding version in front of the new window.

LEFT Wallpaper in the pantry allows the door to remain open for easy access without taking away from the style of the kitchen.

“Bringing lots of natural light into the space contributes to mood and how you feel,” said the designer. “Colors that were selected were cool and calming.”

As a general principle, Winn uses no- or low-VOC products for flooring, stains, caulk and paint. He also places a great deal of emphasis on ventilation. The previous gas oven didn’t have this, but in the new kitchen, the range has a large hood and a balanced air recovery system to bring fresh air into the home.

White cabinets, a baby blue island and a marble mosaic backsplash with metallic accents give the kitchen the light and airy look and feel the clients were seeking. Clear glass pendants and acrylic barstools align with the clients’ aesthetic and don’t break sightlines. The new space is a stark contrast to the original kitchen, and the renovation also included a new deck, easily accessed through French doors.

“We find that the projects we have that integrate the inside and outside tend to be the more successful ones,” said the designer. “The clients are happier, and we feel the space works better.”

SPA-WORTHY BATHROOM

In the bathroom, Winn created another bright space with more natural light. A big window was added – an improvement to the original bathroom that only had glass blocks that let in muted light. Removing the massive built-in tub gave the design team extra space to work with, and a tiny shower was replaced with a more accommodating, glass-enclosed unit.

It was important to the husband to have a spa-like soaking tub, so that was added in front of the spacious window. Winn used a soothing gray and white palette and installed electric radiant heat in the floors – a standard practice in his main bath projects.

Designing wellness into the home can include many options, but letting in natural light might be the simplest and most beneficial. Health and safety can also be taken into consideration during the construction process.

SOURCES

DESIGNER: Michael Winn, President, Winn Design + Build; **ARCHITECT:** Stan Khramov, Winn Design + Build; **KITCHEN & BATH DESIGNER:** Jennifer Hall, Winn Design + Build; **PHOTOGRAPHER:** Stacy Zarin Goldberg

KITCHEN

AIR VENTS: Trufig; **BACKSPLASH:** Artistic Tile; **BEVERAGE CENTER:** Zephyr; **COUNTERTOP:** Richstone Marble & Granite; **CABINET HARDWARE:** Richelieu; **CABINETS:** Rutt HandCrafted Cabinetry; **DISHWASHERS:** Bosch & Thermador; **DOORS & WINDOWS:** Andersen Windows & Doors; **FAUCET:** Mirabelle; **HOOD:** Vent-A-Hood; **LIGHTING:** Latitude Run, Laurel Foundry Modern Farmhouse & Shades of Light; **MICROWAVE:** Sharp; **RANGE:** Thermador; **REFRIGERATOR:** Sub-Zero; **SINKS:** Mirabelle & Rohl; **WINE COOLER:** Avallon

MAIN BATH

CABINET HARDWARE: Liberty Hardware; **COUNTERTOP:** Richstone Marble & Granite; **FAUCETS & SHOWER FIXTURES:** Rohl; **FLOORING & TILE:** Mosaic Tile; **LIGHTING:** Shades of Light; **SINKS:** Kohler; **TUB:** Signature Hardware; **VANITIES:** Rutt HandCrafted Cabinetry