

Efficiency Expert

A design team restores functionality to an '80s home with peculiar kitchen and bath layouts

BY SHEILA KIM

It takes a sizable kitchen with adequate pantry, prep and cooking space to regularly feed a family of five. But the existing one in this home in Lake Forest Park, Wash., was anything but: It lacked sufficient storage and counter space, as well as suitable refrigerator and freezer capacities, forcing the family to frequent an extra fridge inconveniently located in the garage. To address these and other problem

areas in the house, the clients turned to a surprising source of inspiration: social media.

"They found us on Instagram and had been following us for a while," said Emily Ruff, owner and principal designer of Cohesively Curated. Having seen and liked another project her studio completed in the same vicinity, they called on her to tackle their 1980s-era home.



The new kitchen exudes welcoming warmth with its greige-finished shaker cabinets, aged-brass hardware and a marble-simulating quartz countertop. The cabinets now run all the way to the ceiling to eliminate and reclaim dead space. A new sculpted ventilation hood is finished in plaster. Designer Emily Ruff sought to make the slimmed-down island feel more like a piece of furniture by cladding it in white oak.

BEFORE & AFTER

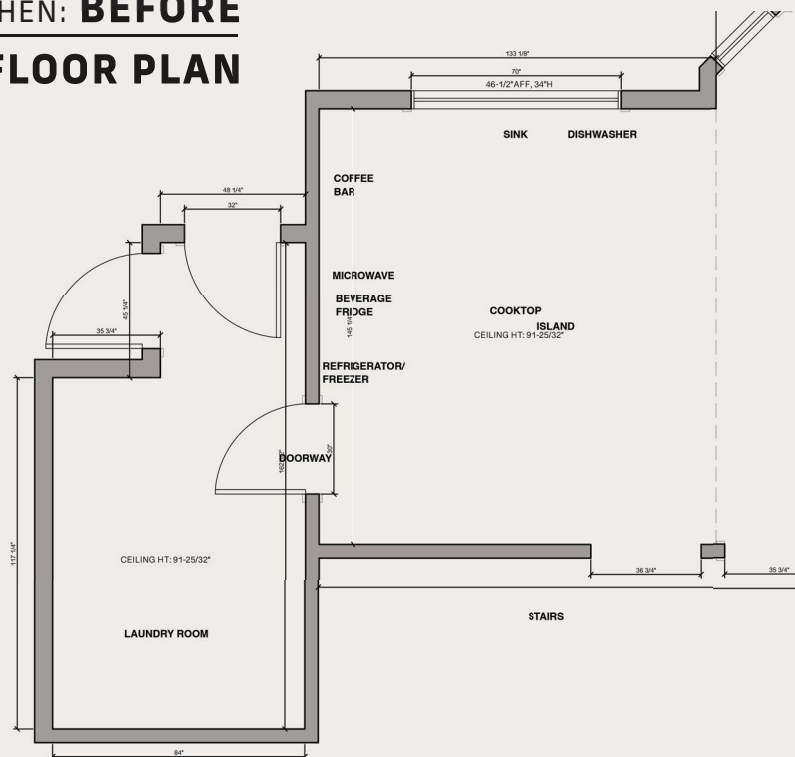


A New Arrangement

Stairs to one side of the kitchen and an exterior wall on the other prevented expansion of the existing kitchen's footprint, so the design team had to make do within those constraints. The strategy was three-fold: First off, the designers rejiggered the appliances and replaced all the existing cabinetry. Previously, the cabinets on the wall backed by the staircase were awkwardly shallow because of placement of a laundry room entry at the back of the kitchen. By shifting the laundry room opening to a position 31 inches away from the staircase-backed wall and extending the latter by 36 inches, the designers were able to incorporate standard-depth cabinetry along this wall and have room enough to fit separate paneled refrigerator and freezer units.

Left: By moving the doorway to the butler's pantry (previously a laundry room) over several inches, the design team was able to install standard-depth cabinetry; they also extended this wall 36 inches to accommodate a fridge and freezer.

KITCHEN: BEFORE FLOOR PLAN



Previously, the kitchen cabinetry was impractical. There was usable dead space between cabinet tops and the ceiling, and one wall with storage potential was significantly shorter than the kitchen width. That same wall had shallower cabinetry because of placement of the old laundry room doorway.



The new cabinets here and throughout the kitchen are full height, reclaiming eight inches of dead space that existed between the old casework and the ceiling, and finished in a warm gray to keep the look timeless. The countertops are Arabescato-simulating quartz, creamy beige zellige tiles were chosen for the backsplashes, and aged brass hardware enhances warmth.

The second part of the project involved reducing the island from 27 inches to a narrow 18 inches deep by removing the cooktop. The design team placed a new range on the back wall and fashioned a custom hood above.

"Regardless of the island size, people tend to gather around it, so our clients didn't want any appliances there," said Ruff.

Because there are lots of square elements in this area, the designer wanted to bring in some rounded ones, hence the shape of the hood – fabricated onsite and plaster-finished – with a curve on the bottom.

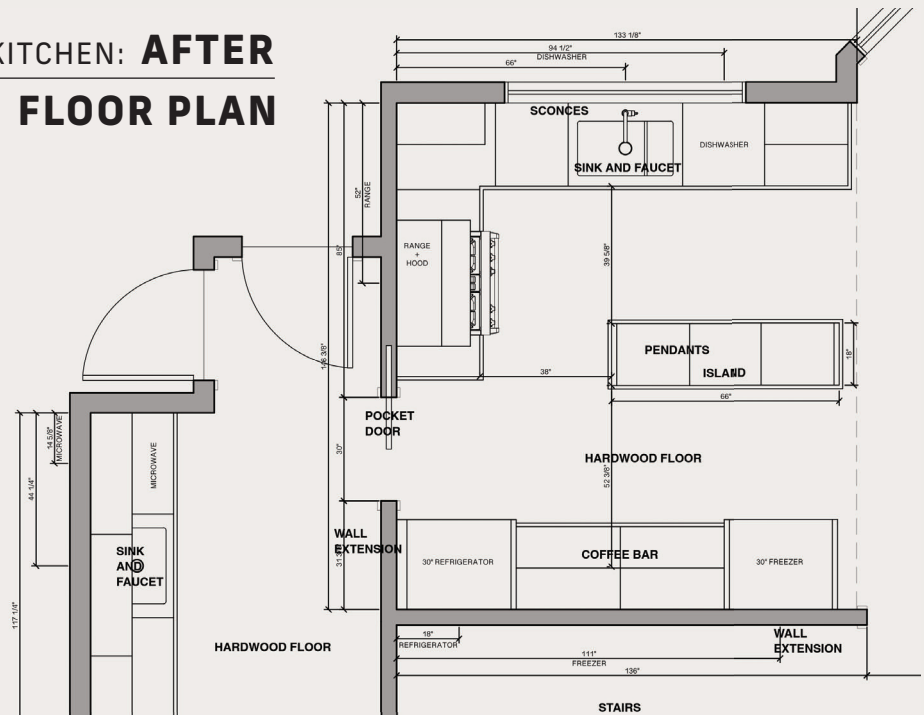
Meanwhile, the island was rebuilt in solid white oak, which injects a warm touch and matches the new floors laid throughout the house. It is also topped with Arabescato quartz and gives the impression of a freestanding piece of furniture. Its slim dimensions also afford ample circulation space despite the addition of deep cabinetry and appliances.

The Butler Did It

As one of the clients hailed from Australia, where butler's pantries are plenty common nowadays, both designer and client saw that adding such a room was the obvious solution to increasing storage and functionality. The laundry room behind the kitchen was the ideal spot for it, so the third move involved converting the space. After relocating laundry machines to a storage closet in the basement, as well as adding a more compact stacked washer/dryer set to the renovated primary bedroom's closet, the designers inserted an L-shaped configuration of cabinetry matching the kitchen, adding approximately 130 cubic feet of storage and a countertop for prep work. This area also holds the microwave, smaller appliances and a secondary sink.

Right: Behind the kitchen, a laundry room was converted into a butler's pantry to provide more storage, as well as accommodate the microwave, second sink and additional counter space. Just as in the main kitchen, the cabinets are paired with a quartz countertop and a beige zellige-tile backsplash.

KITCHEN: AFTER FLOOR PLAN



In addition to installing floor-to-ceiling cabinetry, the designers extended one wall and moved a doorway on an adjacent wall to add standard-depth cabinetry and separate full-height refrigerator and freezer units. They also reduced the island size by moving the cooktop to ensure ample circulation space despite the addition of deeper cabinets and appliances.



BEFORE & AFTER



Left: Echoing the kitchen's new cabinetry and island, the primary bath's double vanity is composed of white oak and a white countertop. Arched mirrors add visual interest while also counterbalancing all the hard edges and angles.

Above: The shower is part of a new wet room, which also features a freestanding tub, in an alcove originally containing closet space. The shower walls and built-in bench are clad in a large-format, marble-simulating porcelain tile.

Below Left: As one of the client's parents visits from Australia for long stays, it made sense to transform the main-floor powder room into a guest bath with a shower. A vibrant wallpaper adds a "fun pop of pattern and color to grab guests' attention," said Ruff.

Setting Boundaries

All the home's bathrooms were in dire need of renovation, too, but none more so than the primary bath, which Ruff said had a very odd and dysfunctional layout. The bathtub and shower were in the bedroom, completely open without any walls around them. A walk-in suite containing a separate toilet space, two sinks and a closet-lined alcove, however, was afforded privacy. The designers kept the wash closet in the same place but gutted the partitions and doors cordoning off the vanity and wardrobe areas. Meanwhile, a new walk-in closet was built in place of the old shower and tub.

With the suite now clear, the team extended the double vanity by 25 inches, all the way to the back wall, and reserved the alcove space for a new wet room. To achieve the neutral and calm environment the clients desired, the designers laid a warm limestone tile floor and installed a white-oak vanity with a light quartz countertop, tying the piece back to the new kitchen island.

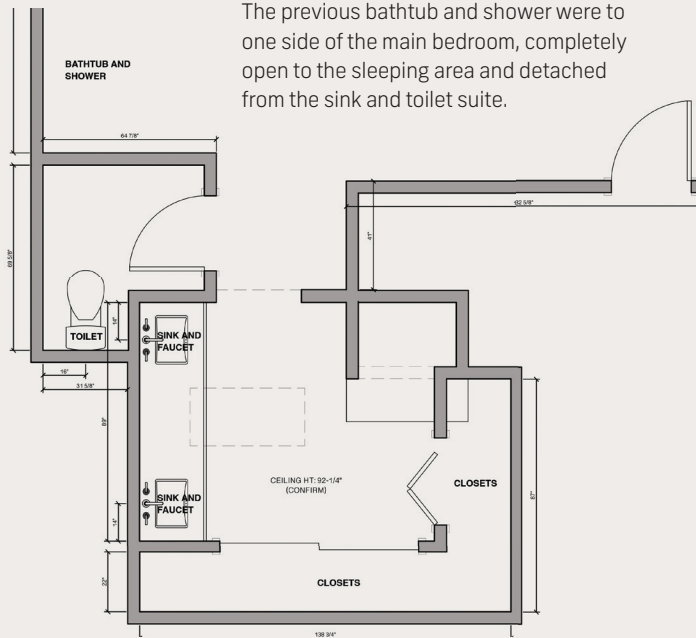


The main floor bath was originally a powder room only, devoid of color and visual interest.

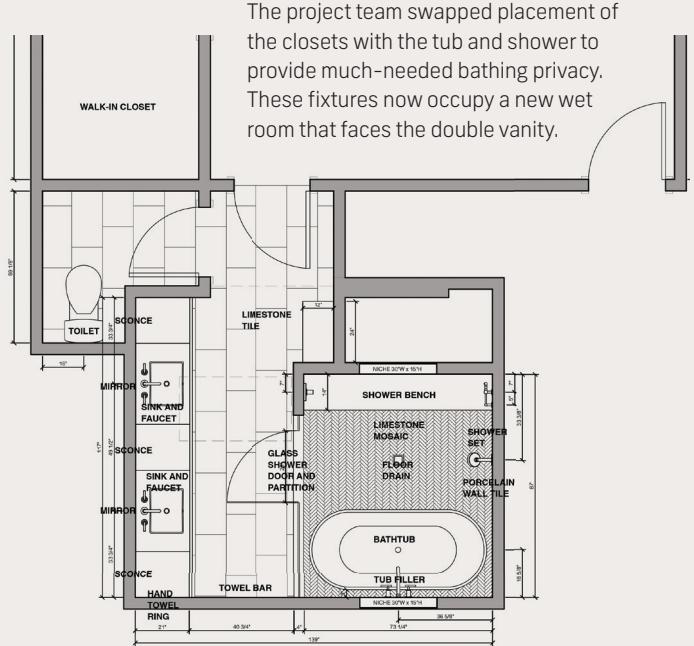


BEFORE

PRIMARY BATH: **BEFORE** FLOOR PLAN



PRIMARY BATH: **AFTER** FLOOR PLAN



Black tiling on the floor and some of the walls of the kids' bathroom made the space feel dark and closed off.



BEFORE

Left: The clients wanted the kids' bath to feel upbeat but not kid centric since they were teenagers, so the designers' response was to brighten up the space by enlarging the shower and installing a frameless glass enclosure, as well as adding a splash of green on the vanity and arabesque-shaped tiles on the floor.

For the wet room, they specified the same beige limestone for the floor but in a herringbone mosaic format that enhances safety. Large Calacatta-evoking porcelain tiles clad this room's walls, a built-in bench is situated on the shower side, and a freestanding tub sits opposite the bench. Enclosed by a frameless glass wall and door, the wet room still possesses an airy and open feel – without the prying eyes. **KBB**

SOURCES: DESIGNER Emily Ruff, Owner & Principal Designer, Cohesively Curated
PHOTOGRAPHER: Carina Skrobecki Photo
KITCHEN: APPLIANCES: Thermador & Wolf CABINETRY: Superior Cabinets COUNTERTOPS: Stratus Surfaces FAUCETS & SINKS: Brizo FLOORING: Riverwood Floors HARDWARE & SCONCES: Rejuvenation PENDANTS: Lostine TILE: Riad Tile
PRIMARY BATH: CABINETRY: Superior Cabinets FAUCETS & SHOWER FIXTURES: Brizo FLOOR TILE: Stone Center HARDWARE, MIRRORS & SCONCES: Rejuvenation SHOWER WALLS: Bedrosians SINKS: Kohler TUB: American Standard