

Out with the Old, In with the New

Top-to-Bottom Whole House Makeover Marries Aesthetic and Functional Solutions

By John Byrd

Owners of this circa-1980's center-hall Colonial situated on Lake Audubon in Reston wanted a "clean sweep" whole house makeover. Kitchen, living room, five bathrooms-- even the attic over the garage and the basement were in play. In short: top to bottom.

It wasn't just that the house they had occupied for 5 years had any particular liabilities. The homeowners knew it could be *more their own-* and after talking to Katherine MacNeil, one of the award-winning designers at Sun Design Remodeling in Burke, they knew it could be done.

"Every great project is a collaboration with an owner," MacNeil says. "When the communication is really good a vision of the homeowners' desires and needs emerges. An idea of how disparate elements throughout the house can be integrated. That's when the aesthetic and functional converge, creating an order that works better for the owners."

MacNeil is quick to point out, however, that a makeover of this scope is less about budget-size than the application of creativity:

"We didn't add any new square footage; we simply reconfigured existing spaces. The budget was focused on a better interior design plan-- yet there's a lot more usable living space."

But to start at the beginning...

The homeowners loved their home's fundamentals-- its spaciousness, lakeside setting, and neighborhood. Moving was not a viable option. Yet so many aspects of the space plan didn't support daily living requirements, and the interior design—all white walls and builder grade finishes-- didn't articulate personal tastes, which included a passion for mission style furnishings and the associated craftsman-style ambiance.

Many of the activities in the home including frequent social functions largely revolved around a rear kitchen that looked out far-too-discretely on a lakeside back deck. The lake was the obvious focal point for the entire property. Yet the existing rear elevation offered only a small bay window over the sink, another bay window and two-panel slider in the adjacent family room.

The effect: separate rooms with bland surfaces doing little to complement the owner's fine art and furnishings.

Immediately, the first step was to re-think the home's rear elevation, exploiting an indoor/outdoor visual continuum that invites-in the exceptional setting. Since the couple wanted the lake to be the home's visual centerpiece, MacNeil's solution called for eliminating two divider walls sequestering, respectively, the formal dining room and the family room.

With the kitchen and family sitting area conjoined as a unified great room, the rear elevation was then redesigned around a 28' foot floor-to-ceiling sun wall. The new interior not only flaunts its visual linkage to the lake from either the dining room or the family sitting area, but the entire vista is now on display from the moment one enters the front door .

"From the start, the lake, free-flowing openness, however, requires a scrupulous evaluation of dozens of scenarios regarding how the space should best be deployed. A dry wall pantry on the kitchen's interior back wall was eliminated; so, too, the kitchen breakfast zone. Wall ovens—formerly affixed to the kitchen/family area divider wall-- would be replaced with state-of-the-art units relocated in the old breakfast zone and surrounded with custom cabinetry.



Sun Design Remodeling Specialist
5795 B Burke Centre Pkwy
Burke, VA 22015
703-425-5588
www.sundesigninc.com

Critical to the new traffic plan, the old food preparation island would be replaced by a 11' x 4 1/2' custom-designed cook top working surface and dining counter--complete with five stools that more than compensate for the displaced breakfast table. The far end of the new island provides storage for ceramic collectibles and (since its higher than the cook top surface) a *defacto* room divider that conceals dishes and pans from the family room sitting area.

Custom built-ins were also created for a space adjacent to the formal dining area. Similarly, the new pantry--relocated in the ceramic-tiled foyer to the garage and upstairs office-- was designed specifically to accommodate a host of household supplies relevant to this part of the house.

To create greater visual unity, MacNeil detailed the new interior with Craftsman-style elements complementary to the existing Mission style furniture that now graces the family sitting area. Looking for a more contemporary interpretation, MacNeil selected oak cabinets facings with inset doors, steering clear of "decorative elements that can seem too precious." The existing oak floors were refurbished. Stressing neutral earth tones, walls were painted in "Texas leather" and a soft, golden hue called "Guest House".

Many surfaces have an appealing textural dimension. Chestnut brown granite is used for surfaces and backsplashes. Three pendant lights—comprised of wrought iron with an aged finish—hover over the dining counter. Hammered amber glass in the cabinet doors and brass latches are among many period details.