



BY JOHN BYRD

Photo Credit: Greg Hadley



(At Top) The bow front farm sink, six-burner stove and food prep island form the three sides of a work triangle that facilitates cooking and clean-up tasks. The custom-designed barn door (right) leads into the new formal dining room.

(Above) A wine rack and wine refrigerator are convenient to a serving counter convenient to the family room and back deck.

# Re-Purposed

FROM CENTER HALL COLONIAL TO OPEN PLAN  
WITH BOLDLY ORIGINAL FINISHES

To satisfy a couple's evolving lifestyle requirements, Sun Design Remodeling dramatically reconfigured the home's first level, introducing a "kitchen-centric" scheme that better supports everyday use and entertainment needs.

Last March, the public was invited to see a "kitchen-centric" first floor reconfiguration in a thirty year old Colonial-style production house in Fairfax Station. While visitors were generally impressed with the project's far-reaching scope, in the end it was the varied, balanced, yet highly-original interior design scheme that got people talking.

"The house was full of intriguing ideas," one attendee commented. "I went home and started re-thinking my entire first floor."

The reaction is not a surprise to Andrew Smith and Madelynne McCarthy who purchased the original model home in 2002. Typical of the style, the first level room configuration was primly arranged: a living room and dining room to the right of the



(Above) Among other problems, the cooktop in the previous island left no room for working surfaces.

entry foyer; a den to the left; a kitchen and family room accessible from a rear archway; a small powder room off the foyer; a back deck through the rear kitchen slider.

“Pretty basic,” Smith says, “but after living in it for fourteen years we could see possibilities.”

Though the 4,000 square foot house had been satisfactory to the owners in many respects, over time the first floor’s small rooms, narrow doorways and builder-grade finishes seemed dated as the couple looked ahead to their retirement years.

“We wanted our house to be a *personal residence* that reflects our tastes,” Andy Smith explains. “A place we can really enjoy.”

As longer occupancy became a regular household discussion, the production house limitations seemed particularly glaring.

“The kitchen was space-constricted and pretty drab,” Smith says. “There was a small island with a cook top that didn’t provide a useful working surface. Doors to the hall closet and powder room obstructed traffic at the kitchen archway, which was too narrow. The kitchen clean-up area was too exposed from the family room. Overall, we pictured a warmer, more aesthetically-interesting interior.”

Several space-enhancement options were considered.

“We had plans to remove the rear wall and add 800 square feet,” Smith recalls, “but when we looked at our real requirements this approach didn’t make economic sense. Fundamentally, we just wanted a larger kitchen and pantry, and an interior that would work well for entertaining. We just weren’t sure how to accomplish this.”

Luckily, last year, a seminar by Sun Design Remodeling unveiled a new way of thinking about the house.

“The seminar prompted us to explore ideas of *re-purposing* space within the home’s existing footprint,” Andy says. “I suddenly recognized we were getting almost no use from our 200 square foot formal living room. It was wasted space.”

In the ensuing weeks, the couple contacted Craig Durosko at Sun Design Remodeling to stop by the house.

“Traditionally, a center hall Colonial is one of the most popular floor plans in northern Virginia” says Craig Durosko, Sun Design’s founder and chairman. “The way people use their homes now has changed dramatically. There’s a movement towards open, interactive spaces, and departure from interior walls.”

As change agent, one of Durosko’s first steps is to help owners envision a space utilization plan that will better support how they want to use their home in the foreseeable future. Hence, once Smith and McCarthy recognized that the front-facing living room could be incorporated into a broader floor plan reconfiguration, Sun Design’s team began proposing alternative “use zones” for the existing first floor template.

Several critical decisions followed in rapid succession, to wit:

- The wall between the kitchen and the dining room would be removed, extending the kitchen by 78 square feet while allowing generous square footage for a walk-in pantry and a new powder room;
- The hall powder room would give way to an enlarged and upgraded laundry and mudroom linked to the garage and only accessible from inside the kitchen;
- All 200 square feet of the old living room would be *re-purposed* as a finished formal dining room accessed directly from the new kitchen;
- With the cluster of doors between the foyer and the kitchen relocated or replaced with pocket doors, front-to-back access from the foyer is now unencumbered and free flowing, an effect aided by improved sightlines.

Meanwhile, a series of interior design conferences evolved into an inspired collaboration.

“In a finish work elaboration, the *details are everything*,” Smith says, noting that his

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enthusiasm for design extends from a lifelong interest in architecture.

“Maddie and I had done a lot of research into the kinds of materials, colors and textures we wanted, but Katie Coram at Sun Design really helped us narrow and refine our choices, assembling the pieces into a coherent whole.”

Some highlights of the interior design solution include:

- A custom-designed barn door between the kitchen and the new dining room. While the interior makeover generally explores rustic, early American sensibilities, a glass-and-wood barn door created to specification by Sun Design carpenters is an iconic stand-out that keeps the dining room private while allowing light from the west-facing rear windows;
- A dining counter/wine bar situated at the back door for deck access. Equipped with a wine rack and wine refrigerator, the wine bar obstructs sightlines from the family room to the kitchen sink, making the fireside space a visually-independent entertainment zone.
- A 6'x 4' food prep island and dining counter. Topped with blue flower granite and equipped with an under-cabinet microwave and a warming drawer, this built-in is proximate to a circumscribing U-shaped counter which supports work triangles in several directions.
- Six burner gas stove with hood. Designed in black mocha glazed wood, the distressed facing picks up



several of the kitchen's rustic themes, including the exposed brick and the flagstone-accented tile flooring which conceals a radiant heating system.

- Dining room with coffered ceiling; Wedgwood interior design. In a nod to the 18th century (colonial-era) sensibilities, the new formal dining room's elegant wall elevations feature raised panels, crown molding and wainscoting.

All of which is a source of much satisfaction to Smith and McCarthy.

“From room to room, the new first floor explores a lot of style elements in well-balanced combinations,” Andy Smith concludes, “It's a much warmer, more inviting interior. And it's truly *our* home now.”

Sun Design Remodeling will be sponsoring a tour of a recently remodeled Fairfax Station home on March 12, 2016. Headquartered in Burke, the firm has a second office in McLean. For information call 703.425.5588 or visit [www.SunDesignInc.com](http://www.SunDesignInc.com) ❖



(Top left) With its coffered ceiling and Wedgwood interior treatment, the dining room explores 18th century (Colonial-era) themes. The circa-1890's glass-and-wood barn door mounted on rollers was created by Sun Design. This customization provides privacy, yet allows light to enter from the home's west-facing rear elevation. (Top right) The home's new rear footprint accommodates walk-in pantry with pull-out storage racks— as well as a larger powder room. (Middle) The relocation of the the hall powder room added square footage needed for a laundry and mudroom that links to the garage.

**AUTHOR:** John Byrd has been writing about residential architecture, building and remodeling for 30 years. His work has appeared in *House Beautiful*, *Architectural Digest*, *Southern Living* and many national and regional publications. He has also written and produced segments for HGTV and other cable outlets. His work has received numerous Press Association awards for excellence in journalism. He can be reached at [byrdmatx@comcast.net](mailto:byrdmatx@comcast.net) or **HYPERLINK** “<http://www.HomeFrontsNews.com/>”[www.HomeFrontsNews.com](http://www.HomeFrontsNews.com).