

Let there be light – and storage



A novel idea — cabinets with etched-glass fronts and backs.

Andrea Rugg Photography

A cramped, dark kitchen in Kenwood is transformed into an inviting “heart of the home.”

By KIM PALMER
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The starting point: For more than a decade, Wendy Bagley and her family had lived with the kitchen that came with their century-old Kenwood house. “It was very, very dated,” she said. “There was not a lot of cupboard space. Our two boys are getting bigger, and we needed extra cooking space and more storage.”

The team: Architect Mark Burgess, principal, and Jim Wilson, project manager, U+B Architecture & Design, Mpls., 612-870-2538, uplusb.com.

Isolated space: As with most homes of its era, the kitchen was separated from the adjacent dining room and den, with narrow doors. “It was very isolated spatially,” said Burgess. “Originally, these urban kitchens weren’t designed as social spaces. They were workspaces, but the way we live today is different. The idea was to link those spaces into the kitchen.”

More elbow room: The family’s kitchen wasn’t small, but it felt

cramped. “There were about 3 feet between the island and the sink, which was very tight,” Burgess said. “One of the tricks we always look for is how do we pick up a little space?” The solution was widening the doorways into the kitchen, to improve the flow, and adding a new room-wide cantilevered bay that added 30 inches, or about 40 square feet of space. That created room for additional storage cabinets and countertop work surfaces. New built-in shelving in both door openings added space for cookbooks and displaying decorative objects.

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STAR TRIBUNE/AIA EVERYDAY SOLUTIONS

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Provided

BEFORE: The kitchen was dark, dated and cramped.

AFTER: The new kitchen, top, was redesigned by U+B Architecture & Design to complement the traditional dining room, left, while adding flow, light and storage.

Photos by Andrea Rugg Photography

Let there be light

◀ **SOLUTIONS** from H1

Filtered light: The kitchen had a north-facing bank of windows that provided a view — of the neighbor’s house 15 feet away. “We needed extra space for storage, but we didn’t want to lose that natural light,” said Bagley. Burgess came up with a novel solution: The center window above the sink is now flanked by cabinets with etched-glass fronts. The backs of the cabinets are etched-glass as well, so light from outside filters through them. “That was pretty unique,” said Bagley. “Now we get a ton of natural light.”



Burgess

Fresh look: The kitchen, last updated in the late ’70s or early ’80s, had all the style statements of that era. “It was almost a time capsule,” observed Burgess. The tile floor, cabinets and countertops were a drab medley of oatmeal hues. “It was 50 shades of beige,” said Wilson. Its fresh new look includes white enameled cabinets, a white subway tile backsplash, granite countertops, a stainless-steel farm sink and a new red oak floor, stained dark to match the dining room. The new island has an oak base with a granite top. “We wanted to have the island feel like a piece of furniture — like a farm table,” said Burgess.

Details make the difference: The most challenging aspect of the project was blending old and new to create a seamless look inside the home. “With any old house, the challenge is adding new space and detailing it so the new parts feel like the old parts,” Burgess said. So the trim profile, wood species and other finishing materials were chosen to complement existing features of the house. “When someone says, ‘I don’t see where the new and old parts are,’ you’ve done your job,” he said.

The result: “We couldn’t be happier with the space,” said Bagley. “We spend a lot more time in the kitchen. The kids do homework there. We do a lot more cooking. We can all be in that room at the same time without it feeling crowded or cramped. It really is the heart of the home.”

SHARE YOUR EVERYDAY SOLUTION To submit a project for consideration, please send uncompressed JPEG images of the element or space, before and after photos if available, and a brief description of the story behind the project to Angie McKinley: mckinley@aia-mn.org.

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