



COURTESY: COLORHOUSE

Comfort & Value @ Home

A SEATTLE HOMEOWNER NAMED LESLIE loved her house's stunning view of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. But the view was difficult to see from a room in which she spent a lot of time: the dark galley kitchen.

■ On the room's western wall, cabinetry and a wood-enclosed oven hood blocked part of the sight line to the large living room windows.

Owners seeking to sell or enhance livability are adding to the appeal of their homes | By M. Sharon Baker

Busy working full time and raising a son, she didn't start thinking about renovation of the 1970s home until her son went to college and her husband began to talk about downsizing. She knew she would need professional expertise to update the home so it could sell for top dollar. "After you live in a house for 24 years, you may pick remodeling projects dear to you but maybe not dear to the masses," she says. "You want to do something that works for you and gives it good resale value."

Leslie turned to Diane Foreman, a designer in the Seattle office of Neil Kelly Company, a design/build business, for help. "Diane knows what's current, what people are looking for and what makes a house sellable and aesthetically pleasing," Leslie says.

Foreman removed the cabinetry and relocated the oven to open up the view, and also moved the kitchen one foot into the dining room, "which made a huge difference," says Leslie. "We went

from a cramped kitchen to a functional kitchen that three people could work in."

Foreman also transformed the kitchen by adding new white cabinets, stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, and a backsplash of white ceramic tile accented by mosaic tile comprising recycled glass and stainless steel.

In addition, she installed new white oak hardwood floors; resurfaced



◀ Facing page: Portland residents Mark Dopheide and Lisa Buckley chose a warm yellow paint from Colorhouse to complement gray cabinets in their remodeled kitchen.

▼ Seattle homeowners remodeled for a better view (left) and to make the kitchen more functional (below).

Continued from page 27.

says homeowner David. "It changes with the lighting, with the light outside and at night."

Cutler says she wanted to make sure "the interior was super comfortable and interesting, but didn't overpower what's outside the window."

She introduced brighter colors in the bedroom, including fabric for pillows in an orange color that was prominent in a painting of a breakfast-table scene that the couple had hung in their kitchen. The orange in the kitchen and in the bedroom provided color from one end of the condo to the other.

In the windowless media room, to create storage space David wanted, Cutler added cabinets and commissioned a desk, putting a curved piece of Interlam on the desk drawers and cabinet faces. "It has great texture in a flowing design that reminds me of water," she says.

Designing for Now and Later

Irene and Chad, a 30-something couple with two young children, worked with Kirkland, Washington's Midori Yoshikawa Design Group to make their Seattle home more kid-friendly after they purchased it in 2010. "The best decision we made was to knock down all of the walls in the main living-space area

and create one large space joining the kitchen, living and dining areas," says Irene. "This is a really great setup where I can always keep an eye on the kids and still accomplish what I need to. I can imagine still appreciating the openness of it all even as the kids grow."

The Midori Yoshikawa-directed remodel also included adding an enormous walk-through pantry, a custom-made kitchen island and a mudroom, and converting a fifth bedroom into a playroom. Another favorite element was the floor-to-ceiling frosted sliding doors for the playroom, which will serve a double purpose, Irene says. One of the doors can sit in front of a vertical row of built-in storage shelves or can slide to the left to create a door for the room.

"Right now, the door system hides the mess of the playroom storage, but can also be arranged to block the room from the rest of the house," Irene says. "That means that as the kids grow, they can have their own space in that part of the home. It was another smart Midori idea: to have your house grow with you."

"Growing a house with you" is a theme discussed with clients every day by Pam Miller, owner of Alchemy Construction in Santa Rosa, California. She recently completed a bathroom remodel for a

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Sonoma County couple. “They specifically wanted a curbless shower to prepare for the future as they age, as it may be more difficult for them to deal with a curb,” she says. “A curbless walk-in shower is also helpful if they needed to use a walker.”

Russell Long, president of Aloha Home Builders in Eugene, Oregon, recommends considering “universal design” when building or remodeling a home. Elements such as hardwood floors, microwave and refrigerator drawers, wider hallways, dual-entry rooms, ramps for swimming pool entrances, and no stairs for entryways or the main living quarters can allow your home to serve your needs even if you or a family member are injured at a future date or you begin caring for a loved one who is aging. For instance, some projects relocate the master bedroom/bathroom and a second bedroom/bathroom to the main floor, while upstairs space is devoted to guestrooms for visitors without mobility issues.

If universal design is done well, it can be attractive and not institutional-looking, says Long, who remodeled his own home to meet the needs of his son, who has cerebral palsy. “Today there are designs and products that blend utility with beautiful aesthetics that are in keeping with a client’s style,” he says.



Boise homeowners enjoy a larger kitchen (left) and family room (below) thanks to rearranging existing space, which was more economical than building an addition.

Better Use of Space

Boise, Idaho, designer Joe I. Human often receives calls from Idaho couples who want to refresh cookie cutter-style homes built in the late 1990s during a local tech boom. For instance, Linda and Steve, a Boise couple in their 40s, wanted ideas for an addition above their garage that would give them more living space.

Instead of the expense of an addition, Human made their existing space more functional by eliminating a large formal dining room that was mostly



COURTESY: JOE HUMAN (2)



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used for storing Lego blocks. He enlarged the kitchen by moving it into that space, also adding white cabinets and stainless steel appliances, quartz for the countertops, and a glass-tile backsplash. He used the former kitchen space to create an eating area and to enlarge the family room, and he enclosed the former small living room to make it into a man cave/guest bedroom.

Linda is especially happy with her new kitchen. "Every morning when I walk out into our kitchen, I smile and say, 'Wow! I am so glad we did this'—I love it!" she says.

Exterior Makeovers


Human also transformed the exterior of the Boise home. "We wanted to modernize the exterior a bit," he says. "We painted the entire house a darker gray color, and added metal and wood accents in key places to draw interest to the front elevation. We also put in new square and rectangular windows, and used metal sunshades to add three-dimensional items."

Lindsay Chambers, a San Francisco-area designer, helps homeowners create a better flow between indoor and outdoor spaces. Clients are "opening up the rear walls of their homes with glass or creating outdoor environments that incorporate interior elements, such as an outdoor porch with a fireplace, she says. When she recently renovated an 1890s barn in Sonoma County, she used glass for most of the exterior wall to allow greater visual connection with the vineyards surrounding the barn.

Perfect Touches

As homeowners remodel their homes, they often find they need to update their furnishings, as well. Updating a few pieces can refresh a whole room, making it more enjoyable and comfortable. Dave Masin, president of Masins Fine Furnishings & Interior Design, a family-owned company founded in 1927, finds that customers want to add statement pieces to their homes.



"Many are spending a little more on a coffee table or a mirror that is spectacular and unique," he says. "Although upholstered pieces and the other items in a room may be a bit more understated, customers are eager to have one to two pieces that have a 'wow' factor. This goes for larger homes as well as smaller spaces and condos."



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Increasingly, clients seek furniture pieces that incorporate leather tops, rattan, elaborate nailhead trim, and other interesting details and textures, Masin says.


Diana Alberghini, the manager of Urban Hardwoods' Santa Monica, California, store, recently helped a couple choose a signature table to spruce up their home. Ellen, a writer, and her partner, a telecommunications executive, wanted a black walnut dining table—a quality piece that would last for decades. The table was made with wood from a salvaged, previously felled tree.

Ellen says that she is intrigued by the whole life story of the tree. “You can see the marks and scars of that tree, the voids where something might have happened to it, the rings that formed over many years of its life on Earth, the impact of water, wind, animals, human beings,” she says. “The table is an heirloom purchase—a piece of art. Everything wonderful takes place around our table—sharing food and celebrations with friends, card games and word games, conversations, counsel, good times and bad times. I put my hands on this table a lot. The tree gives us something beautiful.”

At McKinnon Furniture in Seattle, an interior-design sales expert tells me there's one question she hears virtually every day: Can you make this smaller? “As our customers downsize, they need to optimize the pieces they invest in without sacrificing quality,” she says. McKinnon handcrafts hardwood furniture such as dining tables and entryway consoles in a variety of sizes and configurations, with each piece custom-made after being ordered, to meet the homeowner's needs.

Another change that can make a difference is new paint. “Color is not a huge commitment or investment,” says Janie Lowe, who co-founded the Portland, Oregon, sustainable-paint company Colorhouse in 2005. “It's one of the cheapest things you can do to your home with the biggest impact. You can get a whole new look just by adding a new color.”


Increasingly, that new color is a shade of gray, for kitchens, bathrooms and other spaces, says Lowe, whose company just released the 36-color Handcrafter Color Collection featuring shades of gray and colors that go well with gray, such as



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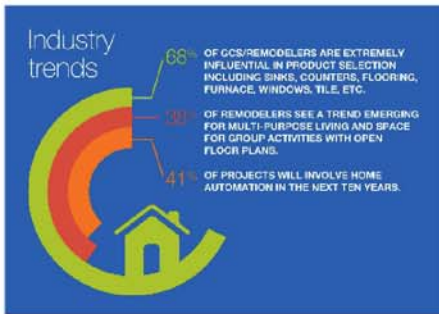
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greens, blues, reds and yellows. For example, when a Portland couple remodeled their kitchen, they chose Colorhouse's Beeswax .05 from the Handcrafter Color Collection to complement gray cabinets, Lowe says.

"Colorhouse's Metal .04 is a medium gray that's beautiful in bathrooms with silvery-green or light-blue towels," she adds. "Metal .05 graphite gray is dramatic and sophisticated in a dining room with yellow tabletop accents."



▲ The diagram above is courtesy of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, whose website, nari.org, includes resources for homeowners.

IN LESLIE'S SEATTLE KITCHEN, the backsplash and hanging lamps incorporate blue-gray, and she likes the color, even though she would not have thought of using it before she brought in a designer, she says.

"In the process of remodeling, our aesthetic changed."

She adds that the renovation of their home "is symbolic of where we are in life: planning for the future while enjoying the moment, and evaluating what kind of space we want to live in."

In fact, she and her husband are now debating whether to postpone selling their home, she says. "We've put ourselves in a position that when it is time to sell, the house is completely updated to appeal to buyers, and we do still have the itch to downsize ... but it's very hard to give up the view." ■

Writer M. Sharon Baker lives north of Seattle in Anacortes. She once painted a house she owned with Yellow Brick Road—a color the next owner replaced with charcoal gray.



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