

Row House



Reconfiguring an oddball bathroom vastly improves the functionality of a small kitchen

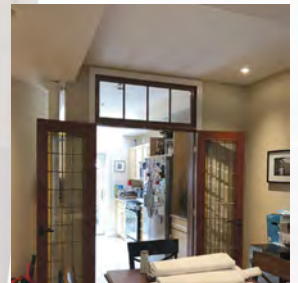
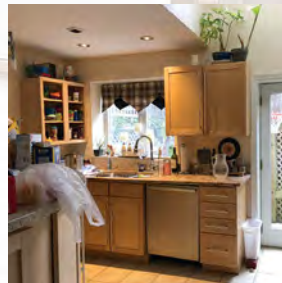
BY KILEY JACQUES

Designer Nicole Cole, principal of vestige HOME, is accustomed to working in Philadelphia's old row houses. She treasures their historical details and time-worn feel. "Even when it's a new space, we want it to feel like there's a bit of story to it," she says. "It should be contextually appropriate." That mindset informed the remodel of this late-1800s row-house kitchen. The homeowners wanted a new space optimized for frequent family meals, and materials had to be tough enough to handle two young boys. It

Remodel



POWDER-ROOM PROBLEM The curvilinear shape of the existing bathroom encroached on the kitchen, taking up square footage. Counter space was minimal and always cluttered, and a skywell added to a convoluted ceiling that impacted the installation of new cabinetry, among other details. A support post between the powder room and French doors added to the awkward visual transition between the dining room and kitchen.



was determined early on that the renovation would not be possible without also addressing the adjacent, awkward half-bath.

Working out the kinks

The oddly shaped and poorly placed bathroom's curved wall pressed into the kitchen, eating up valuable square footage. Outside the bathroom, awkwardly located French doors, an exposed support column, unfinished cabinetry, and an obtrusive refrigerator also needed to be dealt with. "There was a lot of unusable space that made the whole area feel unconsidered," Cole notes, adding that without adequate storage space, items ended up crowding the undersize counter space.

Builder Kenny Grono of Buckminster Green, who carried out the renovation, explains that originally, between the dining room and kitchen, there were five different ceiling planes—including two soffits and a skylight well. One soffit continued out of the kitchen on one side, and then turned 90° in the dining room. Another, on the opposite side of the kitchen, ended at the now-removed dining room wall. The soffits were off from one another by 1½ in., and the main ceiling in the kitchen was roughly 3 in. out of plane with the main ceiling in the dining room. To smooth out the planes, Grono extended the soffit on the range side of the kitchen to create a tray ceiling. "That soffit isn't functional," he notes, "but it made things seem more intentional. We also evened out the dimensional differences between things."

The plan included establishing a few more right angles. The French doors and partition wall between the dining room and kitchen were removed, and the powder room was reconfigured to have a smaller, rectangular footprint. That freed up room for a peninsula, which addresses the limited-countertop problem and provides additional cabinetry. It also houses an undercounter microwave and an integrated beverage center for beer and wine. A shallow bank of cabinets beneath the wall-mounted TV, which mimics a painting when not in use, provides even more storage space. The kitchen is now open to—yet distinct from—the dining area, and the peninsula is a multifunctional station that the kids make good use of.

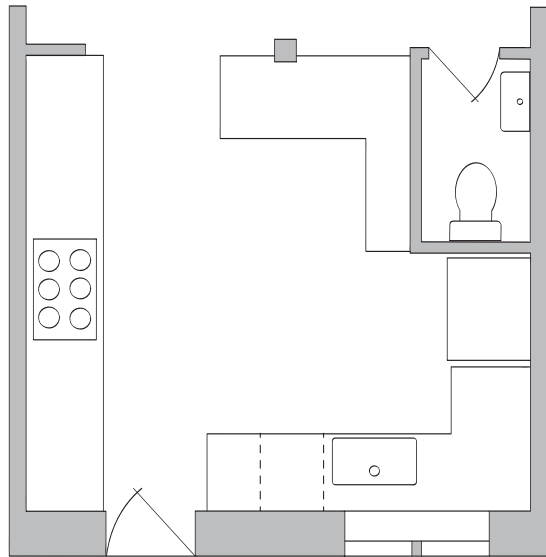
Setting the tone

The painted-steel column had to stay for structural support, but Cole made it a textural detail by wrapping it in reclaimed tim-



ORDER FROM DISORDER

Getting rid of the French doors and turning the structural post into a design feature allows the kitchen and the half-bathroom to breathe independently of one another while working in tandem. Though set in the same location, the new bathroom has no bearing on the kitchen; its now-conventional shape frees up much-needed space, making way for additional cabinetry.



SOURCES

CABINETS Fabuwood, Allure Galaxy in Horizon

COUNTERS Caesarstone in Frosty Carrina

CABINET HARDWARE Restoration Hardware, Modern Pull

BACKSPLASH TILES Fireclay Tile, 3-in. by 6-in. in Silver Haze

RANGE Café, 36-in. Dual-Fuel Professional Range in Matte White

HOOD Custom, white oak with matte finish

POT FILLER Brizo, Euro in Matte Black

LIGHTING OVER PENINSULA Hudson Valley Lighting, Canton Pendant in Old Bronze

FAUCET Brizo, Solna Single Handle with SmartTouch Technology in Matte Black

Soft touch. Pops of wood are used to warm up the cool color scheme. This is an excellent example of transitional style, which marries traditional materials and design details with contemporary selections and treatments.



Rear view revived. Creating a tray ceiling resulted in loads of natural light that reaches all the way into the living room—a priceless quality in a row house with shared sidewalls.

ber from a local salvage yard. “It lends some history to the house,” she notes.

The Shaker cabinets were treated to have a barn-board look—they are meant to be comfortable and durable. “We wanted to bring some farmhouse elements into the kitchen without making it over the top,” says Cole. “I like to do that with materials and colors because I think they elicit an emotion.” Here, she used soft grays, blue-greens, and white oak contrasted with touches of black for a contemporary take on the farmhouse feel.

For flooring, she replaced the existing kitchen tile with wood-look porcelain tile in a herringbone pattern to complement the heart-pine floorboards that run throughout the house. Asked about her choice, Cole says, “If we are going to go with wood on wood, I like them to be different with a distinct style while still working well with the rest of the house.” The wood-look tile adds another dimension to the kitchen, and provides some warmth amidst all of the cool tones.

Signature details

In an atypical move, Cole hung a mercury-glass pendant light—something more likely to be seen in a dining room—left of the sink. “To counterbalance the visual of the off-center faucet, we hung the pendant offset on the other side, so overall it feels balanced,” she explains, adding that she always enjoys the chance to do something unconventional.

Cole was a woodworker in a previous life, and her penchant for the material is on display in the range hood with softly tapered sides. “The nice thing about being someone who has done a lot of work with wood and who understands wood species is that I can be very specific about what I want.” Here, she wanted white oak in a matte finish in a transitional style—a hallmark of her work. “What’s really important to us as a firm is to create spaces that clients won’t tire of in a few years. I think one of the pillars of doing that is to use a blend of styles. Even though we live in this city full of Colonial architecture, it’s not uncommon for us to use a midcentury piece or a modern fabric or light fixture. It might look to some like it’s out place, but I think it adds interest, depth, and longevity to the design.” □

Kiley Jacques is senior editor of Green Building Advisor. Photos by Rebecca McAlpin Photography, courtesy of vestige HOME.



SOURCES

WALLPAPER Cole & Son

LIGHTING Hudson Valley Lighting

MIRROR Rejuvenation

SINK Lacava

FAUCET Brizo

TOILET DXV, Cossu One-Piece Elongated Toilet

FLOOR TILES Interceramic USA

A BIT OF FANCY Royal-purple wainscoting, brass fixtures and accents, and sophisticated but playful wallpaper and floor tiles combine for a tastefully eclectic space. Though smaller than the original half-bath, it is a much-improved composition.