



Embracing Change

New build accommodates family growth by ensuring comfort and well-being for the long haul

AGING IN PLACE was top of mind when Deep River Partners in Milwaukee was contracted to design this new house in Waukesha County. The empty-nester clients were moving out of an older home they'd occupied for 30 years, and they wanted some of the same European charm of the previous residence but modernized for today's living.

It took two-and-a-half years from contract to move-in, and in that time, the couple went from zero grandchildren to five. So while planning a home that would be old-age-friendly for the future, the design team also found itself reconsidering other choices to accommodate little visitors, in the wake of what the wife called "population explosion."

"That was pretty fun," said Nicholas Mather, project architect. "We were making tweaks here and there, in the moment, because their lifestyle changed, too. We incorporated new things for their growing family."

RECOMMENDED FOR ALL AGES

The spaces are designed for ease of movement and seamless flow, with zero-entry thresholds; thoughtful hardware choices; and one-touch technology to control elements like lighting, audio and window shading. In the kitchen, traditional zones are well situated and spaced.

"We always get down to the minute level in our initial talk with the clients," said Mather, "such as where they typically store things and how high they can reach. Everyone needs a kitchen, but what are you actually going to do in that kitchen?"

For these homeowners, the emphasis was on casual dining and convenient food prep, with easy access to the much-used grill (which sits on an adjacent terrace). For entertaining, a beverage center with its own fridge and plenty of space for glassware was installed along one of the walls.

The sizable island and wide aisles create dis-

ABOVE The ample seating area at the island and the sturdy, easy-clean stools are child-friendly options inspired by the clients' five grandchildren. A standing mixer, hidden in a pull-out cabinet on the opposite side of the island, is easily accessible for impromptu cookie-making.

By KRISTIN D. ZEIT

tinct zones for cooking vs. socializing or relaxing—or “helping,” in the case of the grandchildren. According to interior designer Natalie Erickson, the wife was picturing having all the kids over, all around the island with her. The stools, and the fabric covering them, were selected with child-friendly durability and sturdiness in mind.

LIGHT THERAPY

In the clients’ previous home, the kitchen had been relegated to the middle of the house and lost its window facing the backyard to accommodate a large addition. That left the kitchen somewhat confined and definitely dark. They wanted none of that in the new house, which the designers obliged via a fresh, white aesthetic, high ceilings and lots of natural light.

To create a sense of intimacy despite the high ceilings and open flow of the kitchen, dining room and great room, Deep River employed columns of cabinetry at the corners of each room. Perimeter soffits, cove lighting and decorative wood beams on the great room and kitchen ceilings also play a key role.

“It’s part of that European feel: You can imagine these timber beams holding up an old brick home,” said Mather. “But we’ve modernized them by keeping it really clean and simple.”

The warm stain color echoes the flooring and provides additional coziness. Erickson said if the team had done the island stain on the beams, it would be a very different feel. The beams serve another, more sentimental purpose.

“The clients have a lake house that’s been in their family for the longest time, and it has actual timber beams that have been carved and painted,” said Mather. “We thought this would be a nice homage to that.”

A STRAIGHT SHOT

The long, rectilinear primary bath lies between the main bedroom suite and laundry room, with doors to each at the short ends of the space.

“It’s a great flow for their everyday living,” said Mather. “They can cut right through the bathroom with dirty clothes, into the laundry room, then go about their day right from there.”

The roll-in, zero-threshold shower includes multiple showerheads, including a hand shower that can be used when seated should the need arise. Twin sinks and ample marble counter space give the couple some elbow room, and a luxurious soaking tub sits beside a huge window, looking out over a wooded vista. A hidden automatic shade provides extra privacy with the push of a button.

With the prominence of the elongated bathroom floor, Erickson said it had to be spectacular. Again, taking inspiration from European homes with marble mosaic patterns, the designers decided to “zoom out” and do a larger, square-tile install with some contrast. The pattern and coloring mimic the mullions and transom windows along the tub wall, helping unify the space.

For a couple looking to stay in their new home for the rest of their lives, surrounded by family members of all ages, the stage is now set.

“They’ve gone from something really dark and closed-in,” said Mather, “to a home with a vast yard, beautiful landscaping and all this natural light.”

BELOW Just past the shower in the long, spa-like primary bath is the door to the laundry room; the homeowners can conveniently take clothes straight through the space from their bedroom.





ABOVE The Deep River Partners design team selected and placed the appliances with aging-in-place goals in mind. The microwave drawer fits discreetly into the island at an accessible height. The 42-inch double French-door refrigerator is spacious, with smaller doors that avoid blocking passways.



ABOVE The homeowners wanted a bright, airy kitchen – the opposite of the cramped, dark interior space they’d left behind in their old house of 30 years. Deep River Partners incorporated a beverage center along one wall and a huge family-friendly island to help set the welcoming tone.

LEFT A glamorous vanity nook provides an eye-catching transition between the primary bedroom suite and bathroom.

SOURCES: **DESIGNER:** Deep River Partners; **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Ryan Hainey Photography LLC • **KITCHEN APPLIANCES:** Sub-Zero/Wolf; **COUNTERTOPS:** Terrazzo & Marble (supplier) & Lakeside Stoneworks (fabricator); **DECORATIVE LIGHTING:** Visual Comfort; **FAUCETS:** California Faucets; **FLOORING:** Schmidt Flooring; **LIGHTING DESIGN:** Klein Lighting; **SINKS:** Kohler; **TILE:** Ceramic Tileworks **BATHROOM COUNTERTOPS:** Terrazzo & Marble (supplier) & Lakeside Stoneworks (fabricator); **DECORATIVE LIGHTING:** Visual Comfort; **FLOOR TILE:** Ann Sacks; **LIGHTING DESIGN:** Klein Lighting; **PLUMBING FIXTURES:** Kallista; **SHOWER WALL TILE:** Jeffrey Court

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