

Home Remedies

A 400-sq.-ft. addition crowns the house with a graceful new roof, while a batch of small changes revitalizes the tired floor plan

BY KEYAN MIZANI AND ALEXIA ZERBINIS



BEFORE

Our first tour of the home of Jeanne and Joe Kaliszewski and their children was full of surprises, each eliciting a sharper gasp than the last. After interviewing several designers, the homeowners clearly had begun to anticipate the shock effect of showing one bungled space after another, and they enjoyed our growing expressions of disbelief. Built in 1928, the house had all the usual markers of a building's trip through time, such as multiple layers of peeling wallpaper and thick shag rugs in unfortunate colors. But there also were many odd and often unsettling things.

Almost all the original divided-lite wood windows had been replaced with inoperative single sheets of glass, some as long as 11 ft. Mirrored surfaces abounded on the interior, including orange-tinted reflective valances over windows and a wall-to-wall mirror in the dining room.

The layout of rooms and hallways in this house of mirrors created a sense of labyrinthine, circuitous travel, with many dead ends. "But wait, there's more," said Jeanne, as she led us farther into the depths of the house.

To be sure, the house had many challenges but also some great opportunities. Jeanne and Joe took a leap of faith in buying it, recognizing its potential to become a long-term home for their family. First, though, changes were in order from the roof down. The homeowners wanted a master bedroom, a family room near the kitchen, and an office. The body of the house needed its arteries unclogged for circulation to make sense and for daylight and views to have pathways into the house. Every existing room needed new finishes.

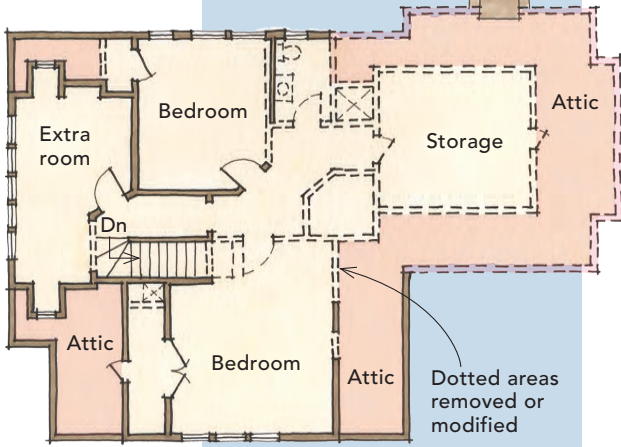
We achieved these goals with one major change followed by a collection of smaller ones. Like the squares of a Rubik's Cube, the changes were

Prescribe a new roof to address multiple problems

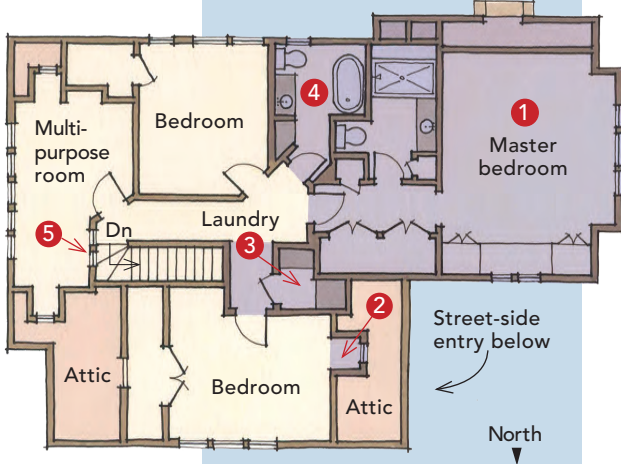


- CHANGES 1-5**
- 1 400-sq.-ft. master-suite addition and covered entry porch
 - 2 New 30-in. dormer
 - 3 New laundry, plus open stairwell
 - 4 Expanded bath for children
 - 5 Interior windows for daylighting

SECOND FLOOR BEFORE



SECOND FLOOR AFTER



interrelated and had to work together to solve the puzzle. The solution included the early involvement of our general contractor, RMJ Construction, who provided preliminary cost estimates, allowing us to evaluate and prioritize the changes under consideration.

Rescue the upstairs with a bold stroke

When Jeanne and Joe first sat down with our design firm, two of their top priorities were to improve the house's front facade and to add a master suite to the second floor. We saw an opportunity to accomplish both with a second-story addition (changes 1–5, p. 67).

The house had some potentially prime real estate lurking under the low roof over the living room. The awkward relationship of this roof to a separate roof over the entry also was the main contributor to the clumsy appearance of the front of the house and to drainage problems caused by the valley between the roofs.

In their place, a new roof now matches up with the highest ridgeline of the house, extending over the living room to provide just enough space for a master suite without expanding the house's footprint. On the north side, the new roof sweeps down in a dramatic curve, sheltering a prominent covered entry porch.

A master bedroom occupies the majority of the addition, with large windows facing the front and additional windows in a north-facing dormer. Closets are positioned on both sides of the hall, a way of getting double duty out of its floor space.

The original upstairs bedrooms and bath were fairly workable, with some adjustments. We expanded the existing bath to include a claw-foot tub, a linen closet, and more wall area for towel racks. Then we annexed space from the overly deep north bedroom to carve out a modest laundry room and to open the hall to the stairway. The reorganized bedroom became more similar in size to the other bedrooms, and brighter due to its shortened depth and the addition of a dormer window. To bring daylight into the hallway, we added east-facing interior windows to the wall between the stair and the multipurpose room.

Cure circulation, and heal the floor plan downstairs

Inexplicably, the main route between the living and dining rooms crossed through the entry foyer, leaving it difficult to furnish and forcing travel down and then up two short stairways. Somewhat counterintuitively, we took out the stairs and filled in the wall between the foyer and the dining room. These changes created a more intimate foyer, protected the dining room from entry traffic, and offered a clearly defined route into the house (changes 6–14, facing page).

This route leads into the central corridor, which previously was dark and underused. We widened it by 6 in., expanded its opening into the living room, and cut a 5-ft.-wide opening in the dining-room wall opposite the frosted French doors of the new office, bringing light into both spaces. The net result of these changes is a welcoming hallway that connects the house front to back and side to side.

To gain an extra measure of light, we removed the door to the stairway and



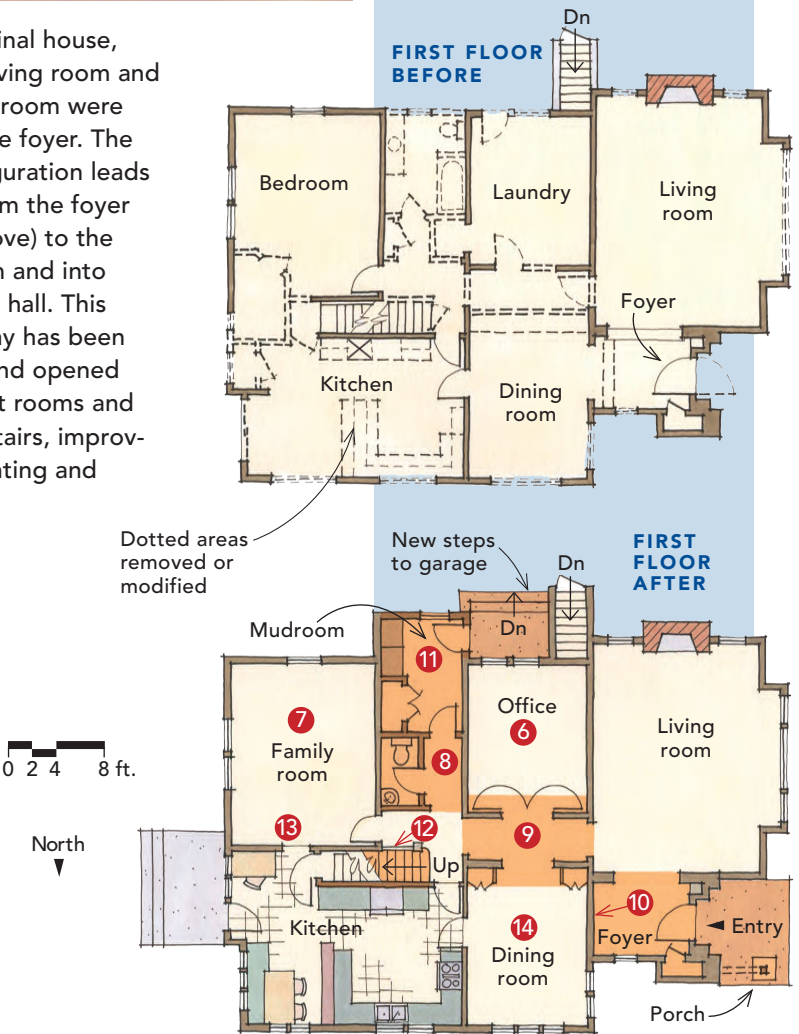
Cure circulation problems downstairs, and reassign rooms



CHANGES 6–14

- 6 Laundry to home office
- 7 Bedroom to family room
- 8 Full bath to half-bath (creates space for mudroom)
- 9 Hallway expanded; new French doors to office
- 10 Dining room closed to foyer; steps removed
- 11 Mudroom enlarged with 40-sq.-ft. bump-out; new steps to garage
- 12 Walls and door removed at stair
- 13 Family room and kitchen connected by passageway
- 14 Dining room opened to hall

In the original house, both the living room and the dining room were open to the foyer. The new configuration leads visitors from the foyer (photo above) to the living room and into the central hall. This passageway has been widened and opened to adjacent rooms and to the upstairs, improving daylighting and circulation.





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replaced the adjacent wall with a railing. This change has created a focal point at the newel post and allows light to flow in from multiple sources, both upstairs and down. The hall's greater degree of openness also allows for outdoor views and cross ventilation.

What probably started as a bedroom turned into an improbably large laundry room somewhere along the line. Its location next to the living room made it a poor spot for a laundry but an excellent place for a home office. Large windows added to the south wall of the room, along with new frosted-glass French doors opening onto the hallway, admit light into the center of the house.

Adding an upstairs master suite allowed us to convert the downstairs bedroom to a family room. We removed a closet and created a passageway to the kitchen, making the family room's location ideal.

Next, we converted the downstairs bathroom into a new entry for the family that includes a half-bath and a mudroom with lots of open, kid-accessible storage and a coat closet. The new entry includes a 40-sq.-ft. bump-out, which is the only change to the house's original footprint. Joe and Jeanne hadn't asked for this space initially, but it appeared as a golden opportunity and now gets heavy, daily use between the heart of the house and the detached garage.

Rehabilitate the kitchen

The kitchen abounded with problems—poor circulation, wasted space, limited views of the yard, dreary cabinets—all of which produced a closed-in feeling. A pair of sliding-glass doors in the northeast corner neutralized an otherwise-desirable place for a table. In addition, an unused chimney, hanging cabinets that cut the space in half, and a pantry closet too deep to be used efficiently cluttered the room. We got rid of everything and started over (changes 15–19, facing page).

We put two pullout pantries in the space formerly occupied by the chimney, which in turn freed the area previously clogged by the original oversize pantry. In this space, we relocated the back door, added



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more windows overlooking the yard, and found enough room for a homework station. An adjacent breakfast nook, with a built-in bench and new windows in place of the sliding doors, has become a favorite place for daily gatherings.

The rest of the kitchen's layout remains largely the same, but we fine-tuned it to enhance the sense of space. We moved the stove to the wall formerly dominated by the refrigerator and replaced all the drab woodwork with stock frame-and-panel cabinets and trim painted white. Linoleum floors, laminate counters, and tile backsplashes were selected to evoke the original style of the house and to help the project stay within budget. These light-colored surfaces impart a bright, roomy feel to the kitchen. It is now the heart of the house, with places along the perimeter for enjoying a meal, reading the paper, doing homework, or just hanging out. □

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Attend to the kitchen, and make places to hang out



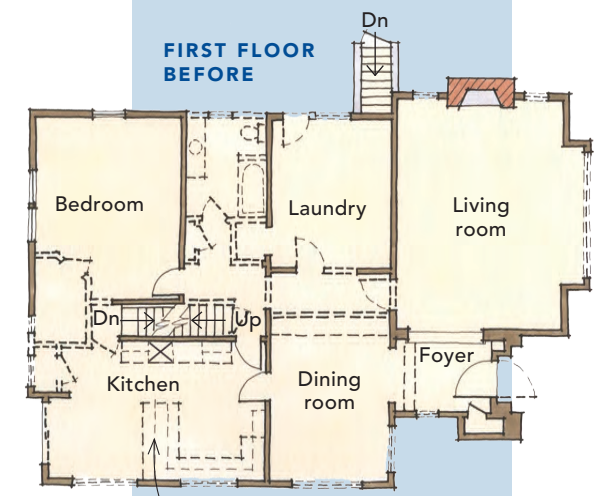
BEFORE

Simply relocating the back door allowed for significant improvements to the back of the house. The northeast corner is now a breakfast nook with a cushion-covered bench for the kids. The parents, who typically need more mobility at the table, have chairs on their side. The new back-door location allows a view to the yard. And the dark, dreary plywood cabinets (photos above) have been replaced with new cabinets in keeping with the original Craftsman style of the house.

CHANGES 15–19

- 15 Back door relocated
- 16 New cabinets; fridge relocated; half-wall separates breakfast nook
- 17 New breakfast nook
- 18 Pantry replaced with homework station
- 19 Obsolete chimney replaced with pullout pantries

FIRST FLOOR BEFORE

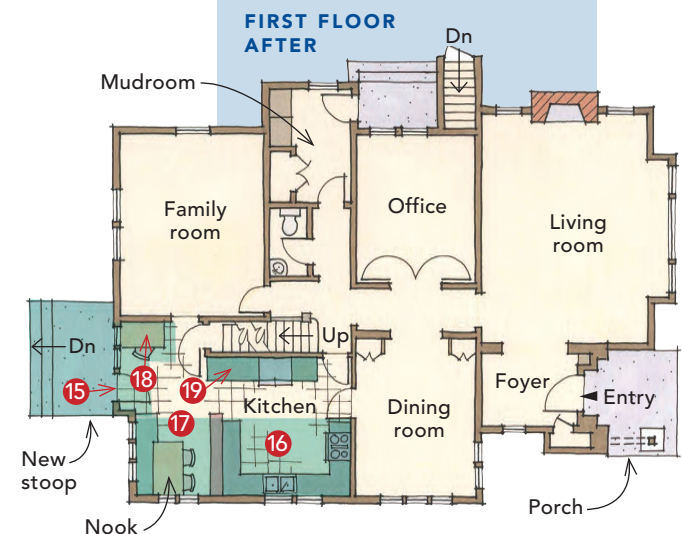


Dotted areas removed or modified

North

FIRST FLOOR AFTER

0 2 4 8 ft.



17



18