

BOTTOM to TOP

Roots to roof remodel turns a flawed house into a showplace

By Wendy A. Jordan, Senior Contributing Editor

Why not stop by?" thought Mary White. She and husband Bill White were researching remodelers for their 1953 split level, and a Remodelers Showcase home — a project completed by Minneapolis design-build company TreHus Architects+Interior Designers+Builders — was just a mile down the street. She went to see the house, and something clicked.

"I was impressed by the work," recalls White, as well as "by the demeanor and professionalism" of the TreHus representatives. They were not aggressive, but they were there to help and to show off their nice work. It was the right approach for me."

Two years later and after a bold residential transformation, White had praise for another Showcase home remodeled by TreHus — her own.

No place but up

The existing four-level, 2,032-square-foot house was no match for its outstanding location. In a sought-after neighborhood convenient to downtown Minneapolis, the property directly overlooked the Mississippi River. But the house failed to capture that view. Besides, the rooms were small, storage was poor, the kitchen was outdated and isolated, and there was no powder room.

When the roof over the family room — a 1980s addition by the previous owner — began leaking and shingles started falling off, "We knew we couldn't put off replacing the roof," White says. As long as that work was going to be done, the Whites decided to pursue "a cohesive plan to update the entire house."

Top of the wish list was a master suite. After 21 years in the house, the Whites were tired of the small first-floor bedroom that shared a bath with another bedroom; they wanted a private bedroom and bath suite that incorporated ample closet space. For the remodeled kitchen, the Whites envisioned a bigger, brighter, more well-appointed space that functioned



TreHus added a 756-square-foot pop-up for a roomy master suite. A long, large island helps integrate the remodeled kitchen and family room; the design-build company made better use of breezeway space with a 72-square-foot addition containing a powder room and mud room.



COMPANY SNAPSHOT

TreHus Architects+Interior Designers+Builders

Owner: David Amundson

Location: Minneapolis

2011 sales volume: \$3.1 million

Projected 2012 sales volume: \$3.5 million

www.trehus.biz

TreHus expanded and transformed the kitchen by opening it to the adjacent family room; installing maple flooring, a large suite of maple cabinets, high-end appliances and elegant quartz counter tops.

well and opened to the adjacent living area.

With no place in the house to put the master suite, TreHus's then-staff architect, Merriwhether Felt, proposed a pop-up over the living room, kitchen and entry. The 756-square-foot addition would provide enough new room not only for a spacious bedroom, bath and walk-in closet, but also for a changing room, a reading nook, a private balcony, and a bonus room for Mary's exercise equipment and Bill's musical instruments.

For the first floor, the architect designed a storage-rich kitchen that extends seamlessly into the family room. An island sculpted in a

dynamic L configuration doubles as kitchen work center and buffet. The TreHus design called for enlarging the dining room and replacing a breezeway between main floor and garage with a 72-square-foot addition that houses a powder room and mud room.

Beating the odds

Company president and owner David Amundson says, "We do very thorough plans and specs, and we say, 'Let's talk about the numbers early and often.'"

A TreHus pledge is "to give value to every customer." Design



A covered balcony off the new, top-floor master suite overlooks the Mississippi River.

project manager Dave Carson, CR, adds that TreHus presents estimates itemizing line-by-line costs, as well as the TreHus markup and management fee. This open book approach "establishes trust with our clients," Carson says, and details the costs that go into producing a quality project so that informed choices can be made during project development.

But the White remodel was "a complicated job," says Carson, and "the level of finishes they selected was high." Bids from subs and suppliers for the approved design drove the estimate considerably over what the Whites were willing to spend. At risk of losing the construction contract, TreHus asked all vendors to reduce their bids. They did. (See "The Financials" sidebar.)

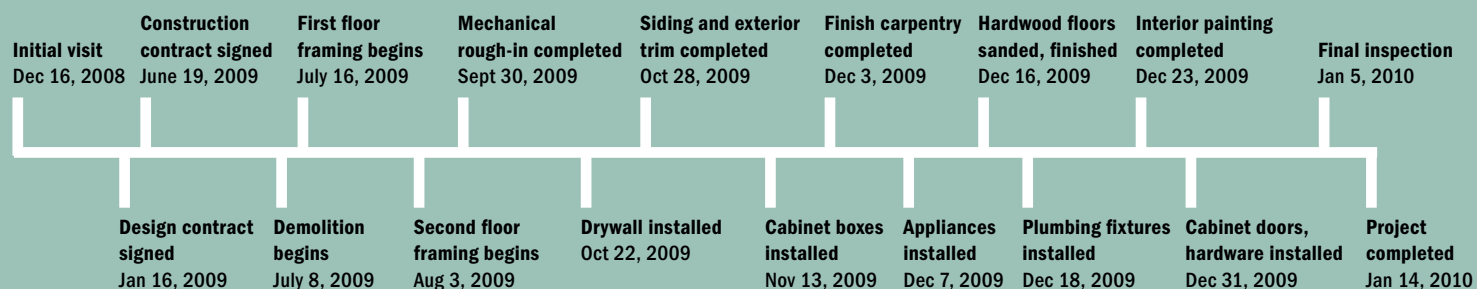
Construction began in July 2009. As project manager, Carson runs numerous jobs concurrently and oversaw the White project daily.

"We want our master carpenters to practice their trade," he explains, without the distraction of on-site management. Steve Groff was the master carpenter on the White project.

Adding the pop-up was "a significant structural challenge," says Carson. Massive LVL beams were needed above the main floor exterior walls to support the added story. TreHus was able to insert them in sections with so little disturbance to the structure that half the main level ceiling finish was preserved.

To keep the pop-up from overpowering the building, TreHus designed "a multi-pitch roof" for the new suite, integrating it with new roofing over the lower bedroom wing (where stairs occupy a former closet); the roofing over the powder room/mudroom addition; and a hip-roofed tower over the entry. The

PROJECT TIMELINE





The master suite offers all the features the old master bedroom did not have — loft, light, luxury, and generous space.

PRODUCT LIST

Countertops: Caesarstone
 Door locksets: Emtek
 Doors: Simpson
 Fittings: HansGrohe
 Range: Blue Star
 Refrigerator: KitchenAid
 Roofing: GAF
 Sinks: Kindred, Kohler
 Steam oven and microwave: Miele
 Steam unit: Steamist
 Windows: Marvin



Making it right

TreHus quickly discovered that the family room problem was more serious than just a leaky roof. The 20-year-old addition was “under framed, poorly built and poorly insulated,” says Carson.

The floor, built over crawlspace, was not level. The roof sagged. Carson told the Whites that the 15 by 20-foot room was substandard, and was effectively “a big hole in your house” in terms of heating and cooling. On his recommendation, the Whites asked TreHus to reconstruct the room, with new trusses, shingles, insulation, insulated windows, additional heating ducts, and maple floors to match the new kitchen flooring.

Working with TreHus designers, the Whites carefully assembled a palette of natural materials and colors for the remodel. That included quartz counter tops in a warm grey. Despite earlier discussions with the fabricator, when the order was placed, the color was out of stock for an undetermined

time. At Carson’s urging, the fabricator searched the nation. In Chicago, he found “just enough” for the White’s kitchen.

company rented a tall crane to hoist the pop-up’s large roof trusses over the mature trees on the property and onto the house. Bad weather complicated the already complex job of framing the roof, with its many planes. Days of heavy rain meant that the structure had to be tarped, so “we couldn’t really see” the whole composition, says Carson.

It wasn’t until the roofer was putting up the shingles that Carson got a good look and realized “something was not right.” He determined that trusses designed for one end of the addition had not been provided. The lumber company covered the cost of redoing the section. The clients, it turned out, didn’t realize there had been an issue, but were happy it was resolved.

“It did look kind of empty up on that end,” White mentioned to Carson.

The TreHus staff expected the task of installing new mechanical equipment in the utility area on the bottom level of the house to be easy. They did not realize how important the space was to Bill White, whose workbench occupied the same area. As Mary White recalls, her husband said, “I need as much storage space as possible,” which means different things to different people.” To Bill White, it meant capturing even the smallest of spaces. TreHus re-routed plumbing lines and heating runs to accommodate Bill’s workbench and existing storage, and to gain valuable inches for new shelving, says Amundson.

“We are very happy with the remodeled house” from bottom to top, says Mary White. **PR**