



The original kitchen was small and confined to a corner of the house, and the only dining space was in the formal dining room. Now, the kitchen is located in a central part of the house and open to the family room, making it better suited for a family with young children.

s p a c e exploration

Remodeling
project in
Minneapolis
accommodated
young family
of six, plus
puppies.

BY ALLEEN BROWN

PHOTOS BY
SUSAN GILMORE

Eric and Gina Buss needed more space. Two sets of twins, 9 and 5 years old, and two 1-year-old puppies will crowd any house. But they didn't want a huge home; they just wanted something that wouldn't make them feel like sardines.

"More spaces to hide, read a book, play the piano or take a nap. We wanted space that allowed the kids and dogs to run wild. We wanted lots of light and an open feeling, but without the wasted space of a lot of larger homes," said Gina Buss. "We wanted to be able to live in each space and maintain the warmth of the house."

"They had outgrown their existing home," said architect Mark Kawell, who did the initial design of the remodel. TreHus took over for the final interior design and construction. "When this home came on the market, we looked at it together as the raw ingredients to accommodate their family's needs."

The house on Emerson Avenue South in Minneapolis was built in 1908, and for the Busses it was love at first sight. "The house had a warm aura about it and good bones," Buss said. "The woman selling it was in her 80s, had lived here 50 years and had raised a daughter and three sons (just like us!) in it."

But the design was old, the kitchen was small, and the layout lacked the circulation and sightlines necessary for keeping track of the kids. "It was very much the kind of plan that forces you to walk through rooms to get to other rooms," Kawell said.

TRAFFIC CONTROL

The remodeled home includes a new kitchen, a breakfast nook, a butler's pantry, a home office, a master suite, a playroom, a refinished

“THE BOYS ARE IN A SUITE ON ONE END OF THE HOUSE WITH A BATHROOM, AND THEN (THE OLDER TWINS) HAVE A BATHROOM BETWEEN THEIR ROOMS, AND ERIC AND I HAVE THE MASTER BATH ... SORT OF ... THE KIDS STILL USE IT MORE THAN ANY OTHER BATHROOM. THEY LOVE THE GIANT TUB AND THE HEATED FLOOR!”



A key part of the remodel was making sure there were enough bathrooms for six people, but the master bath is everyone's favorite.

basement, more storage space, an updated interior design and outdoor patio and play areas. The layout solves the circulation problem by making rooms accessible from hallways and opening spaces between rooms. “The upstairs has a central room and has circular movement,” Buss said.

The original kitchen was small and confined to a corner of the house. The only dining space was in the formal dining room — not ideal for a family with young children.

Kawell's solution was to relocate the kitchen to a central part of the house and open it to the family room. He also added a breakfast nook, where informal dining could take place.

“We're all together during the making of the meal as well as when we eat,” said Buss. “The breakfast area makes a great homework station as well as a nice spot for doing craft projects.”

Since the kitchen would no longer be connected to the formal dining room, Kawell and TreHus added a butler's pantry with counter space for serving and storing food and wine.

Upstairs, the architects added a master suite and updated the bedrooms. They also made sure there were enough bathrooms to accommodate six people.

“Two per bathroom upstairs,” Buss said. “The boys are in a suite on one end of the house with a bathroom, and then (the older twins) have a bathroom between their rooms, and Eric and I have the master bath ... sort of ... the kids still use it more than any other bathroom. They love the giant tub and the heated floor!”

GREAT OUTDOORS

Anyone with kids knows the outdoors are as important to a living space as the indoors. The Busses recruited Ground One to design an exterior space that would make the outside of the house as comfortable and family-friendly as the inside.

“It was important that this not only be aesthetically nice but also work well with their children,” said Pat Weiss, Ground One owner and project manager. “It was blending the architecture of the landscape with the architecture of the house, but at the same time being mindful that it needs to function like a park.”



A butler's pantry with counter space for serving and storing food and wine was added to the formal dining room.



"There are play spaces that interconnect the patio and driveway for basketball, soccer or hockey," Weiss said. "There's another section of the back yard that has kind of a swing set/tree fort in it, so that kind of play area for the younger kids is integrated into it."

"They fenced in the back yard for our dogs to run freely, built an amazing fireplace and bluestone connecting circular patios," said Buss. "The front of the house has a circular patio, set back down a few steps, and a patio that extends the length of the front of the house."

Kawell and TreHus made sure the exterior and interior would flow together. "They are blessed with an incredibly beautiful rear yard and side yard that have wonderful trees," Kawell said. "We were able to add much larger windows and door spaces to create the largest amount of view and sun."

"TreHus put in two huge recessed windows for light downstairs and connected our screen porch to a stained cement grill deck, which connects to glass doors into our breakfast area," Buss said.

The windows were about more than just pretty views. "I love to see the kids and dogs when they are running around outside," Buss said. "We have lots of windows and sightlines going from one end of the house to the next. I can stand in a hallway and see front and back."

The next step will be a mural on the neighbor's garage, which is connected to the Busses' yard. One idea is to paint a view from behind Twins home plate, so when Gina or Eric pitch a ball to the kids, it will look like they're at the Twins stadium. The Busses have interviewed artists and plan to start the project this spring.

After a year of living in the new space, Eric, Gina and their brood are cozy, happy and uncrowded.

"We feel like we've been living here for a long time," Gina Buss said. "It was a thoughtful design that blossomed into a piece of artwork." *

Alleen Brown is a Twin Cities writer.





“THEY FENCED IN THE BACK YARD FOR OUR DOGS TO RUN FREELY, BUILT AN AMAZING FIREPLACE AND BLUESTONE CONNECTING CIRCULAR PATIOS,” SAID GINA BUSS. “THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE HAS A CIRCULAR PATIO, SET BACK DOWN A FEW STEPS, AND A PATIO THAT EXTENDS THE LENGTH OF THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE.”