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A 1980S REMODEL GROWS UP >>

FEW WOULD ACCUSE THE 1980S OF BEING A PERIOD PARTICULARLY BURDENED BY REFINED TASTE. AND JUST LIKE SHOULDER PADS AND PERMED HAIR,

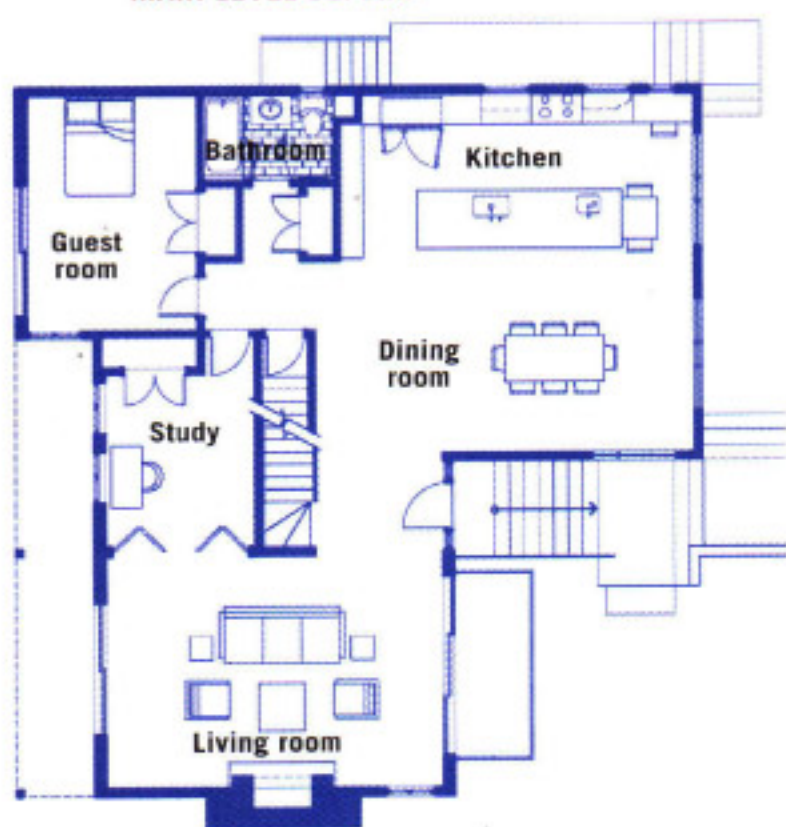
many Reagan-era home remodels don't stand the test of time. >> The Northwest has its share of blocks filled with homes demanding a style update. Happily, a wrecking ball isn't usually required; instead, impressive transformations can be had by employing some relatively straightforward solutions. >> Such was the case with a North Seattle home that architect Nils Finne of Seattle's Finne Architects took in hand in 2002. "The house started off with black aluminum windows, Formica and some sort of dark-stained oak veneer cabinets in the kitchen and white Corian in the master bath—there was just some terrible stuff inside," recalls Finne. "The previous owner was a real do-it-yourselfer and you could tell." >>

TEXT
ERICA JORGENSEN

PHOTOGRAPHY
ART GRICE



MAIN LEVEL BEFORE



MAIN LEVEL AFTER



BATHROOM BEFORE



KITCHEN BEFORE

TO USHER THE HOME INTO THE 21ST CENTURY, the owners called upon Finne, whom they'd heard of through colleagues and neighbors. The couple was especially attracted by the architect's reputation for importing custom woodwork into his projects.

The main goal of the remodel itself was simple: "to open up the boxy, ungainly floor plan," says Finne, in order to give the residents "the feeling of a completely new house."

While the 1930s house is perched enviably high above the street to allow for pristine views of Lake Washington and the silvery Cascades beyond, its 1980s makeover missed the mark. For example, on the main floor, two bedrooms monopolized the view, relegating the kitchen and dining room to a claustrophobic afterthought. The second-floor deck was hemmed in by a high railing that blocked the view for anyone sitting inside.

For the owners, who entertain frequently, the old kitchen was especially vexing. It wasn't facing the water, and was barely bigger than an

Pages 54–55: A 1980s remodel left the home looking boxy and LEGO-like, and with a second-floor deck railing that blocked the occupants' view of Lake Washington. The simple addition of subtly repositioned and patterned new windows brightens the home's attitude and seemingly its altitude. **This spread:** **Kitchen:** Before revamping, dark cabinets drag down the kitchen, and there's barely elbow room to spare. With white oak flooring, gleaming new custom maple cabinets and sandblasted-glass windows built into the backsplash, the kitchen is transformed. **Bathroom:** Dated lighting fixtures and cabinetry make the old bathroom a makeover must. The new bathroom glows with warmth—from the custom mirror and light fixtures that span the vanity and twin sinks to the coil-heated limestone floor tiles. **Blueprints:** On the main level, the minuscule kitchen is transformed into a powder room, and two bedrooms are resurrected as the new kitchen and dining area.





adjacent bathroom. Navigation was also a problem: In order to reach the kitchen, one was forced to zigzag, Pac-Man-style (quick right—quick left—quick right), past a coat closet and two main-floor bedroom doors. A similarly cramped dining area also meant that social gatherings quickly grew noisy and congested.

The solution? A simple matter of strategic repositioning and removal. The only room configurations left untouched by Finne were the living room and a second-floor family room. (Tackling the 3,100-square-foot layout reshuffle was a snap for Finne, who was a project architect on the mammoth Getty Museum in Los Angeles.) Upstairs, one bedroom was enlarged by tearing down a wall and reconfiguring the closet and bathroom walls. Downstairs, kitchen and dining room deftly traded places with the two view-hogging bedrooms (a wall separating the bedrooms was removed to make room for the new kitchen and dining room). The old kitchen became a petite powder room, and the old dining room a smaller guest room. Outside, the original deck was replaced with a

streamlined canopy perched above a new downstairs deck, which opened up viewing options upstairs and gave the home's facade a much-needed modern punctuation.

When it came to the interior embellishments, the architect's decision to repeat the same material palette of natural and man-made elements—wood, stone, steel and glass—throughout created a pleasing symmetry.

"I believe that the juxtaposition of materials is a powerful method to allow each material to gain in richness and beauty," explains Finne. The simplicity of the materials chosen also allows the homeowners' art collection, from their travels in Bali, Greece, Korea, Turkey and Mexico, to take center stage. To that end, the now Formica-free kitchen features a handsome drawer-lined maple island beneath a dark gray basaltina (which is basalt injected with resin to increase durability) counter; the living room fireplace surround crafted of rose and gray-hued Montana ledgestone is topped with steel straps and a

maple mantel; and the new exterior deck of ipe, also known as ironwood, is set off by a cable-and-steel railing.

Meanwhile, in the upstairs master bath, "pretty much the only thing we left were the skylights," says Finne. Formerly frumpy, the new bathroom boasts a basaltina counter and maple cabinet combination designed by Finne, suspended above a limestone-tiled floor. A steel-framed mirror and recessed light-fixture combo with fiddleback maple accents serves to visually elongate the room. This striking piece, fabricated by Matt Shoudy of SoDo's Illume Inc. (the designer behind the hip lighting at Belltown's Top Pot doughnuts), is another of Finne's creative touches.

But it might just be a deceptively basic element that makes the most dramatic difference in this remodel. Larger but leaner windows, not only give the home a notable "lift," but a clean, contemporary face that will stand the test of time. +

Erica Jorgensen lives in a garden-fronted 1930s Cape Cod in Green Lake. She also writes for Amazon.com and Seattle magazine.