

HOMES

Fall back in love with your old house

Foster Remodeling hosts open house for inspirations

BY JOHN BYRD
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When does a house become dated? The answer may be subjective, but sixty years is a long time in the life of a kitchen. When an older home becomes antiquated, you want to revitalize -- not just the house, but your enjoyment of it. It's a situation that calls for inspired thinking.

David Foster, president of Foster Remodeling Solutions, and the skilled professional whose design team rehabilitated the 1,200 square foot North Arlington rambler, is inviting the public to an open house on Saturday, March 24 from 11a.m. to 2p.m.

Located in Arlington's Boulevard Manor neighborhood, the three-bedroom, circa 1950's brick rambler has been owned by Chris and Megan Tighe since 2009. To make the house more suitable for a family that includes a school-age daughter, the remodeling entailed joining two small rooms (kitchen and dining room) and incorporating the footprint of a rear-facing sun room.

The new 350 square foot suite is configured as an open floor plan that includes a gourmet kitchen, family dining zone and mudroom situated near the door.

Meanwhile, the suite's eye-catching, transitional-style interior is enhanced by a custom-designed food preparation island, built-ins and a stunning view of a leafy backyard brimming with mature trees.

To make the plan feasible, Foster Remodeling Solutions removed 16 feet of rear elevation bearing wall, raised the former sunroom floor to level with the kitchen and installed matching hardwood throughout.

For added structural support, the sunroom foundation was excavated an additional two feet



PHOTOS BY LARRY GOLFER

A vertical backsplash comprised of 1"x1" tiles reconciles the white Swanbridge counter and serving station with the black Cambria quartz surrounding of the cook's work station.

and secured with concrete footings. To augment available light, a 10'x 6' window wall-- insulated with Argon-filled double ply glass-- provides a spot-on view of the Tighe family garden.

"We learned early on that an open house can help neighbors find ideas for improving their own homes," says Foster. "People can see for themselves what design styles are being introduced, and what technologies are proving practical, even life-enhancing."

Visitors searching for direct professional input, on the other hand, are free to explore ideas with Dory Clemens, the Foster Remodeling Solutions' designer who executed the innovative makeover.

"This is an exceptional transformation," says Clemens pointing to the many original built-ins and distinctive interior elevations. "The ideas implemented here respond to a broad range of owner requirements, yet colors and textures work together to create a warmly habitable living space."

Looking back, Chris Tighe says that he and his wife, Megan, started thinking about remodeling not long after moving into the house nine years ago.

"A childhood friend with an

architectural background initially helped us sketch out some perspectives on a CADD system," Tighe recalls. "There were feasibility issues that my wife and I couldn't really assess, yet we routinely discussed and thought about ways we might make the new house feel larger, more functional and more personal."

Obvious shortcomings to the existing house included:

- A small kitchen (9' x 11') and adjacent dining room (10'x11') abutting a sunroom (20' x 7.5') six inches below the kitchen floor
- Rear rooms that (owing to the sun room) were too dark
- Outdated kitchen counter surfaces, flooring, wall coverings and fixtures
- Limited kitchen storage
- Overall: Dysfunctional floorplan in which the dishwasher door blocked access to the sink.

Eventually, the Tighes learned about Foster Remodeling from neighbors, and decided to set up a meeting.

"I showed our drawings to Dory and she immediately began pointing out options that improved the plans in ways I hadn't even considered," Chris Tighe recalls. "This quickly became a

very productive process for the whole family."

Chief among the technical challenges: how to heat and cool the new space. The foundation required for the new suite would restrict access to the existing HVAC system. Clemens, on the other hand, had a ready solution in the form of a mini-split HVAC unit: "In the past decade or so, a mini-split has become a very effective way of heating and cooling a large open addition," Clemens says. "You don't need to retrofit existing systems. This application has opened up a lot of possibilities for adding-on to older homes, and is very cost-efficient."

To better rationalize the new floorplan, Clemens proposed adjoining the kitchen and dining room and removing a section of rear-elevation separating the house from the sun porch.

The plan entailed removing some 16 linear feet of bear-



PHOTOS BY LARRY GOLFER

The old porch roof was replaced and tied-off with the roof on the home's main block. The foundation to the former sunroom was reinforced with concrete footings; spray foam insulation assure a seamless, thermally-comfortable interior.

ing wall on the rear elevation, then installing a horizontal steel I-beam balanced on concealed vertical shafts to hold up the roof.

The resulting space is expansive, yet intimate. A two-level food preparation island and dining counter set up thoughtful work triangles. There are custom cubbies for favorite wines, a shelf for cookbooks and a built-in microwave. The island's top-most surface serves as the dining table-- and doubles as a lunch counter for anyone gathered on stools below.

"It's the details that really work," Tighe observes. "The room never feels cavernous."

A built-in bench on a mosaic tile mat by the rear door provides a place to change-out and store shoes before entering the house.

"It works as our mud room, but doesn't take up much space," Tighe says. "It's the suggestion of its function that works so well in an open plan."

On that note, Tighe is pleased

that the Foster team found ways to spare the crepe myrtle and other backyard trees while executing necessary excavation and building tasks.

"The garden view from any place in the kitchen has made this house very special to us," Tighe says. "We want people who visit to see what's now possible in our neighborhood."

Owing to limited space, persons interested in attending the open house should call 703-550-1371 and ask for the address, or RSVP online at <https://www.fosterremodeling.com/resources/free-educational-seminars/>

John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached @ 703/715-8006, www.HomeFrontsNews.com or byrdmatx@gmail.com. Send photos of interesting remodeling projects to: b2b@homefrontsnews.com

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