

2024 Washingtonian Residential Design Awards

Project Title: Wye River

Location: Queenstown MD

Date of Completion: 7/01/2023

Project Statement:

Conceived as a replace-in-place project, this full-house rebirth transformed the style and atmosphere of this house along the water without impacting the existing utility or structural systems. Our clients loved the site of this 1980's home along the Wye River but desired a modern, simple interior to work with their existing mid-century roots. The structure was well built and had all of the programmatic elements that our clients needed, so we were brought in to re-imagine the details of the home. Four main areas of precise modification: stairhall, living room, kitchen, and primary suite. All bathrooms were renovated and the existing saturated cherry floors were updated with a matte finish. Trim was simplified, wallcoverings upgraded, and lighting upgraded to LED's. Using materials like bronze and walnut in crisply detailed elements allowed us to connect with the rich, warm material palette of the original french colonial style. Preserved original moldings and millwork in the library provided a contrast to the new crisp interiors. Pragmatically, it was important to minimize changes to the original utilities, and show that subtle detailing and material modifications could transform the home for its new inhabitants.

Design Narrative: How does this project address Design for Integration, Wellbeing, and Discovery?

The architecture in this project takes a delicate approach. Subtle changes such as softening a rigid soffit into a built out sculpted archway or removing decorative coffered beams to draw attention to the windows instead of the ceiling made dramatic improvements to the overall cohesiveness of the house, without drastic remodel. Repetition of simple elements such as a delicate metal picket or a bronze frame tie together spaces throughout the home. This property was renovated with the intention of bringing various family units together and allowing the inhabitants to age in place. A first floor primary suite, office and laundry allow for one floor living. Upgrades during the renovation to accommodate aging in place included a roll in shower, blocking for grab bars, slip resistant floors in the primary, and modifications to the office desk to allow for wheelchair access.

Community Engagement: How does this project address Design for Equitable Communities and Economy?

Renovations are often maximized to justify cost per square foot against comparable properties. In this case, we were able to show our client the benefits of maintaining the building footprint and layout and renovating without expanding.

Sustainability and Resilience: How does this project address Design for Ecosystems, Water, Energy, Resources, and Change?

As we strive to renovate our buildings with less disruption and waste, this project serves as an example to show clients how they can transform a space with minimal discarding of existing building systems. Re-thinking existing building materials and changing their finish and in place allow for a creative refresh.

Wye River Renovation / Wye River, Maryland

Conceived as a replace in-place project, this full house rebirth moved no plumbing or structural elements but transformed the style and atmosphere of this house along the water. Our clients fell in love with the site of this 1980's home along the Wye River, but desired a more modern and simple interior to work with their existing mid-century roots. The existing structure was well built and had all of the programmatic elements that our clients needed, so we were brought in to re-imagine the details of the home.

There were four main areas of surgical modification: Stair Hall, Kitchen, Primary bath and closet suite and the Living room. All bathrooms were renovated and the existing cherry floors were refinished with a more matte and less saturated finish. Trim was often simplified, wall-coverings were upgraded, and lighting was modified throughout to upgrade to LED's. The material palette retains some of the richer and warmer colors of the original french colonial, but uses materials like bronze, and walnut in crisply detailed elements. The library space, retained with some of it's original paneled moldings and millwork provides a nice contrast to new crisp interiors.

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While this project is definitely a study in before and after, what was most important for us was to retain the utilities of the building, (plumbing, electrical, mechanical) that existed and could remain in place, and show that subtle detailing and material modifications could transform the home for it's new inhabitants style.

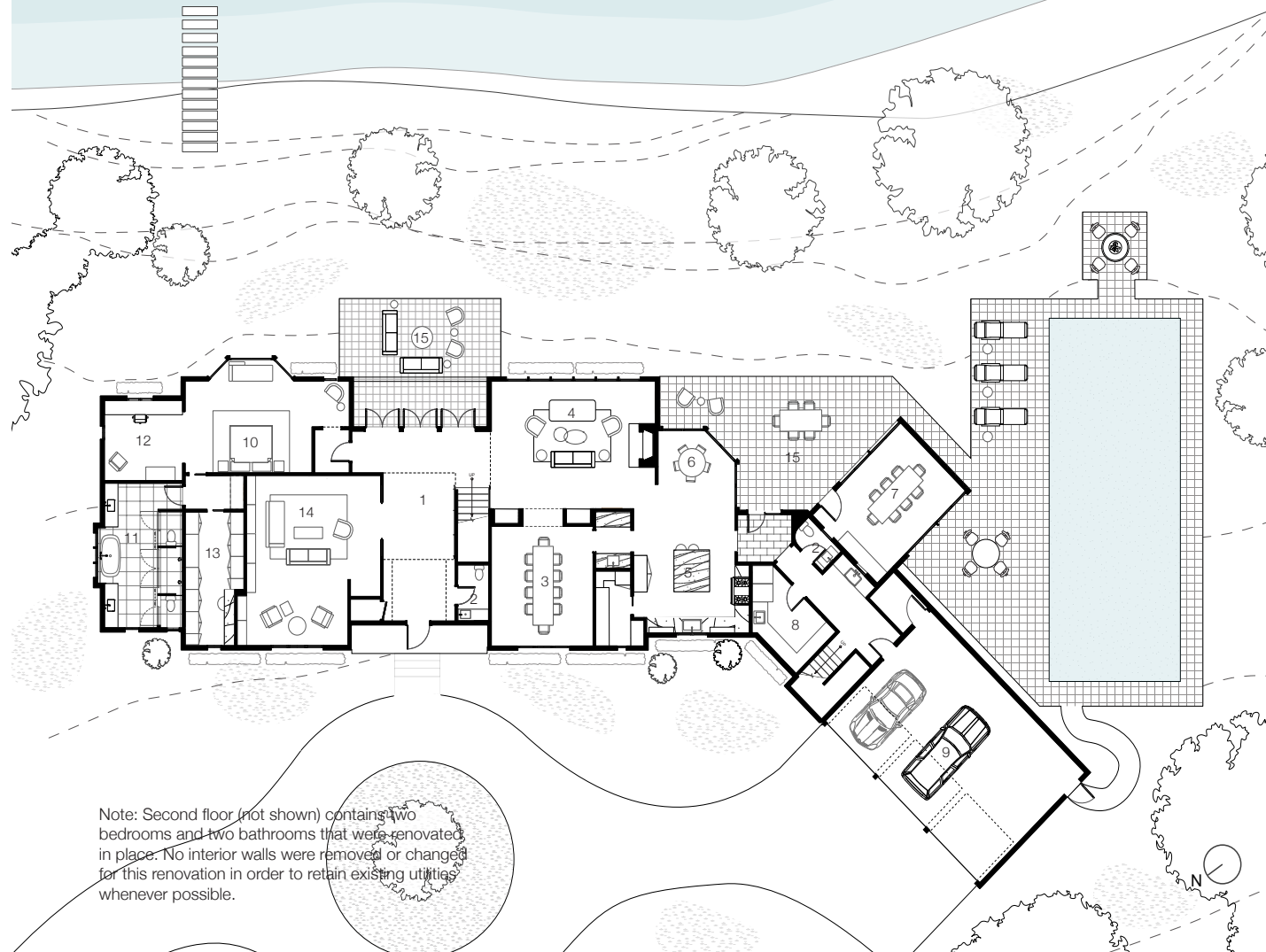




Heavy faux beams were removed from the ceiling to focus the attention to the windows and the water beyond.

MAIN LEVEL

- 1 STAIR HALL
- 2 POWDER ROOM
- 3 DINING ROOM
- 4 LIVING ROOM
- 5 KITCHEN
- 6 BREAKFAST ROOM
- 7 SCREENED PORCH
- 8 LAUNDRY
- 9 GARAGE
- 10 PRIMARY BEDROOM
- 11 PRIMARY BATH
- 12 OFFICE
- 13 PRIMARY CLOSET
- 14 DEN
- 15 PATIO



Note: Second floor (not shown) contains two bedrooms and two bathrooms that were renovated in place. No interior walls were removed or changed for this renovation in order to retain existing utilities whenever possible.



(above) The stair underside was sculpted to simplify geometries, and new glass rails opened views to the water.

(right) Before view of stair hall with curved bottom treads and cast iron handrail. The handrail was repurposed as a new fence along the marsh grasses on the property.





The dining room entrance archway was softened and sculpted. A bulkhead that was empty was removed between the living area and kitchen to open up the first floor sightlines.

A heavy rustic stone veneer was removed from the existing fire box and replaced with a new stone slab and bronze surround, set flush with the floor, tying into the other materials and finishes introduced into the house through the renovation.





(above) Existing built-in niches flanking the dining room entrance were upgraded with a new bronze shelf insert and white ribbed door fronts.



(right) A bulkhead between the kitchen and living room was removed to connect the spaces. New cabinetry in the kitchen includes a simplified hood and a simple corian countertop.





(above) Original kitchen. The new kitchen incorporated the location of the original appliances and plumbing fixtures.

A metallic finish defines the cabinetry faces and contrasts with the warm cherry floors. A stone backsplash continues the dramatic color tones of the living room fireplace.



New windows with a lower sill were one of the few exterior modifications. They bring added light into the primary bath and better connect the room to the marsh and water beyond. The new bronze blades allowed for building out the wall to wall-mount plumbing, frame individual vanities, and reflect soft light into the room.



(above) A ceiling-mounted vanity light cantilevers to one side. The vanity has three doors that open to internal drawers within.



(left) Existing bathroom. The room was a series of pieces placed in a large room instead of a cohesive design approach.



(above) Before view of the shower stall and two toilet rooms.

One goal of this renovation was to show that, with a new attention to detail and a consistent material palette, the space could be transformed without disruption to major utilities or structure.



(above) After view. A simplified rhythm of bronze panels of frosted glass and mirrors unifies one wall of the bathroom to hide two toilet rooms and shower. (left photo shows opening to shower)

(right) The vanity was custom designed to slide out from the bronze blades and hover over the ground. To warm up this space full of hard surfaces, we designed a wood textured vanity with hidden internal drawers, and added elements like a cork wall covering to the toilet rooms.





A custom towel bar was designed for in front of the mirrors that conceal the toilet rooms. Reflective surfaces provide unexpected glimpses to the water and marsh outside. Frosted glass panels are contrasted with a warm walnut textured vanity.

(right) The shower was modified to have a roll-in shower so that the homeowners can age in place. Porcelain wall surfaces with a linen texture reference the primary dressing room's linen clad cabinetry.



(below) The existing primary closet incorporates a new vanity area with thin oak framed doors inset with linen for sound absorption and visual warmth.





The pattern of bronze frames was applied to one of the existing small windows at the front of the home that was left unchanged. Mirrors top and bottom elongate the room and reinforce the pattern of reflective surfaces.