

# A DREAM OF A

# REMODEL

BY DIANN NICHOLS



**LEFT:** An 11-foot kitchen island is the centerpiece of the remodeled kitchen.

**TOP:** The original short wall cabinets were replaced by ceiling height shaker-style cabinets for better storage.

**ABOVE:** The awkward placement of a peninsula in the “before” kitchen blocked the natural traffic flow.

continued on page 10

## BGHL SHOWCASE

**BELOW, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:** Twenty-three wafer LED lights were placed around the perimeter of the area to provide better lighting.

A walk-in pantry is virtually hidden behind cabinet-style doors.

The island and base cabinets are hickory with a satin finish.



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What started as a small water leak under the refrigerator ended up being a dream home remodel for Casey and Cheryl Hixson. Although the Hixsons' house, which was built in 1959, had been through a facelift by the previous owner, this was the first full-scale remodel. "We had talked about it several times in the past, but this was a good time to do it," said Cheryl.

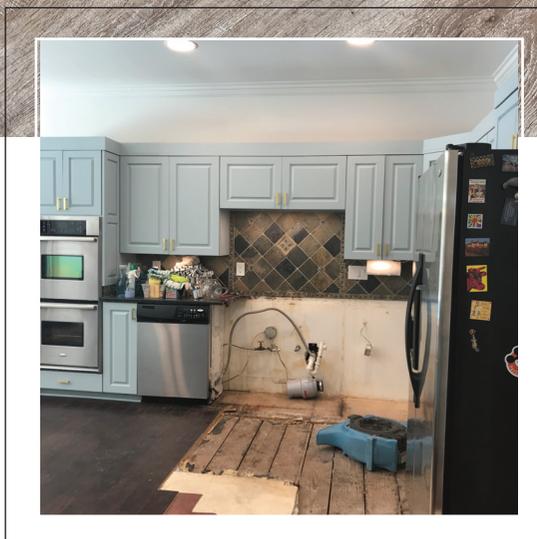
As is the case with many older houses, one thing leads to another when it comes to re-



pairs. “When they took the floor up under the refrigerator, they discovered asbestos, which then required all of the floors on one whole side of the house to be removed,” said Cheryl. “And we decided that since we were doing that, we were just going to go right ahead and make our dream house.”

The Hixsons turned to Tim Graham, owner of Design Builders, and Rachel Harris, design

continued on page 12



**ABOVE:** Removing walls created an expansive living/dining/kitchen area.

**LEFT:** The dream house remodel started as a result of a leak under the refrigerator.

Natural maple planks help give a light, airy feel to the remodeled music room.



project manager at Creative Interiors Design Center, for the remodel. Working with the Hixsons' ideas, Tim generated a 3-D interactive computer design that allowed the Hixsons to view the space from all angles and virtually walk through it. This process permits the designers, as well as the client, to see what works and what doesn't while ensuring there's no miscommunication about the work to be done.

Tim uses this unique process because "certain things become apparent to you as you're standing there looking at it that

you wouldn't necessarily see or notice if we weren't doing this 3-D design process." When these unexpected results are found during the design process, they are easily corrected before the work begins, keeping the client from spending money on something they might not like.

The Hixsons knew they wanted to remove walls. The original space, which consisted of a living room, dining room, kitchen and music room, felt cramped and didn't flow well. By removing four walls, those rooms were combined into

one large, open space. To give the space an airy feel, the original dark flooring was replaced with a light-colored luxury vinyl plank flooring by Karndean. "We're really seeing a lot of the luxury vinyl plank used on projects," said Rachel, "because everyone's busy and wants finishes that are easy to care, aesthetically pleasing while being highly durable." The flooring has the added benefits of being waterproof and having an acoustic sound barrier on the back of it, making it ideal for families with kids or pets, both of which the Hixsons have.



**PICTURED FROM TOP TO BOTTOM ON RIGHT:**

The luxury vinyl plank flooring is waterproof and durable, a necessity for the Hixson family.

A wall was removed between the music room and the kitchen to create a nice, open floorplan.

Durable slipcovers protect the furniture from wear and tear by the Hixsons' dogs.

Maple planks placed on a grid frame the woodburning, double-sided fireplace in the music room.

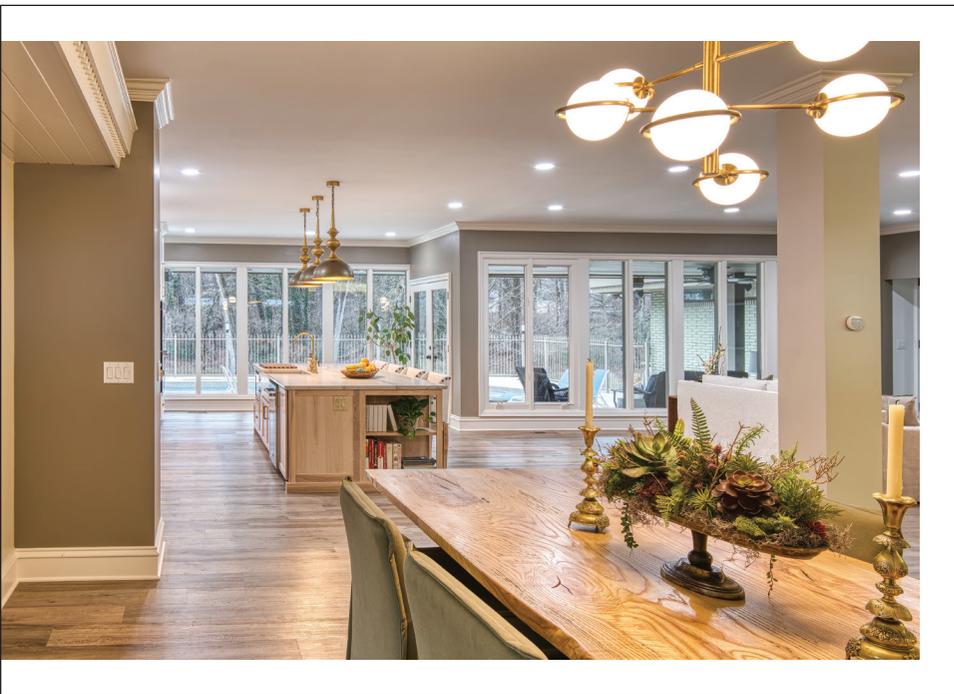
**BELOW:** A dark brick wall surrounding the fireplace and dark furniture gave the "before" music room a confined feel.



The double woodburning fireplace between the living room and music room also received a facelift. The original painted fireplace mantel in the living room was replaced with a beautiful living edge mantel and tile surround. In the living room, the footprint of the original 1950's midcentury modern fireplace remains. Wood was placed over part of the original brick cladding in this inviting space. Maple tongue and groove planks create a surround to showcase the brick on the fireplace. The woodgrain for the surround was enhanced with a satin finish.

continued on page 14





Casey Hixson made the living edge dining table, incorporating bow-tie joints using wood handed down by his great-grandfather, who was a violin maker.

continued from page 13

The remaining visible bricks were painted with a masonry paint, Romabio, in white, to offer a fresh new design. To further add an airy feel, the Hixson's replaced dark furniture with natural wood and lighter-hued pieces. They purchased loveseats from Foxhole in the Grove vintage store in Smiths Grove and had them reupholstered by Laura Brewer of Brewer's Furniture Upholstery. To accommodate wear and tear by their dogs, they chose performance fabrics and slipcovers for ease of care. Casey, a woodworking hobbyist, built the gorgeous wood coffee table and dining table using tools handed down from both Cheryl's and Casey's grandfathers. Bow tie joints in the dining table were made of wood from Casey's great-grandfather, a violin maker.

It was the kitchen, however, that received the biggest re-do. "It was just a terrible floorplan for a kitchen," Cheryl said. "It was not workable and I cook a lot." Once the floorplan was revamped, an 11-foot kitchen island replaced the awkward peninsula to create a more practical galley-style space. Durable Quartzite in galactic white was used for the top of the island and the countertops as well as a custom-made sink.

continued on page 16



**LEFT:** Motion-detector lights were installed in the hidden walk-in pantry.

**BELOW:** Wall-to-wall shelving provides ample storage in the walk-in pantry.



continued from page 14

The two-tone shaker style cabinets are a combination of painted white maple and natural hickory. To maximize storage space, full-height cabinets replaced the shorter wall cabinets.

A unique feature of the kitchen is the hidden walk-in pantry. By replacing the existing door with cabinetstyle doors, the pantry blends in and becomes less visible. “Functional design is important to me and this feature is one of my favorite things about this project,” said Rachel, “because it’s completely hidden. Nobody would know this pantry is there.”

The coffee nook is another unique transformation. “It was formerly a broom closet,” stated Cheryl, “that was kind of in an awkward place and it wasn’t very user friendly. It was just a catch-all for junk.” The door was removed and shelving added to create a perfect spot for setting up morning coffee.

As with most older houses, electrical outlets and lighting were scarce. That was remedied by using custom under

cabinet LED lights, complete with integrated receptacles, and LED recessed lighting in the ceiling. Three pendant lights were also placed over the island. Remodeling and building these days can be tricky because of supply chain issues. That wasn’t a problem for the Hixsons.

On successfully dealing with supply chain issues, Tim said, “we have a piece of software that allows the client to log in and see virtually everything about their project. They can see their budget, they can see their schedule, they can see all of the things that are approved and signed off on. They literally sign off on it online. Anything that hasn’t been approved, they can see the effect it would have on their project if they don’t approve it by a certain date. In this case, everything was virtually done before we started the construction process.” Rachel continued, “About 90% of the finishes we use for our projects are selected prior to signing the contract. When the customer signs the contract, we order all approved selections.

This process increases efficiency, accuracy and removes last minute pressure to make a big design decision. Our process allows the needed products to be available when it is time for our tradesmen are ready to install.” One reason the Hixsons decided to use Design Builders is because “Tim’s reputation preceded him,” Cheryl stated. “He has a reliable group of craftsmen that that are available to complete his projects. But the most important part of it is that he has a project manager and a design project manager that come with his service. Rachel Harris’ and Randy Howard’s jobs are to design the project, keep everyone on schedule, keep everyone informed, procure all finishes for the project and to check and double check and triple check for perfection. And they did their jobs very, very efficiently. We were on schedule. We were on budget. We ended exactly on schedule and exactly on budget.” And that’s how remodel dreams are made. **BG**