



THE BATHROOM BEFORE

ONE-ROOM MAKEOVER CREATES A REAL BEAUTY

By Jackie Sheckler Finch, H&L



Carol and Jeff Buszkiewicz.

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Sitting down at his home computer, Jeff Buszkiewicz pulls up “before photos” of the family’s master bathroom. Then he shows what the bathroom looks like now. Can it possibly be the same place?

“It’s the exact same footprint,” he says. “We didn’t make it any bigger at all, just worked with the space we had.”

But what a difference the renovation has made. The bathroom looks larger, brighter, far more useful with additional storage space and definitely much more beautiful than the original.

“We love it,” says Carol Buszkiewicz. “It turned out even better than we expected.”

Wanting to get rid of the old white cabinets and white tile floor was what started the bathroom renovation. After living in the house on Bloomington’s

east side since 1998, the couple had found that the bland bathroom was not at all their style. It was white almost as far as the eye could see. Jeff and Carol wanted to liven it up a bit, make it more reflective of the warm, earth tone colors they prefer.

Then Carol and Jeff were faced with difficult decisions: Who to hire for the project and what their final design choices would be.

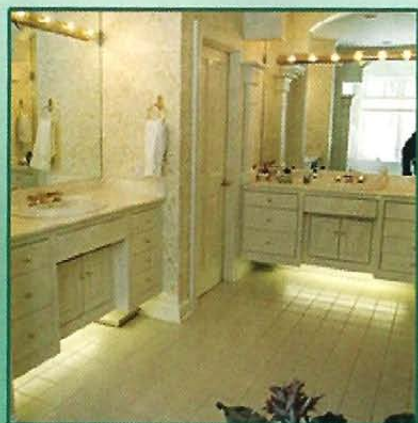
“That was the hardest part—making all the decisions on selections,” Carol admits. “You have to decide on what kind of cabinets, what color, what style, what kind of handles, what kind of faucets, what kind and color of flooring, what price you want to pay ... There are so many choices you have to make that it’s almost overwhelming. And as eager as you are to get the project started, nothing can be done until the choices are made.”



The bathroom before and during the renovation. Courtesy photos

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Finding a contractor wasn't that difficult, the couple says. They asked friends about whom they would recommend, who had a reputation for good work. They narrowed it down to several local companies and are pleased with their choice—Larry Routen of Lifestyle Kitchens and Baths.

“We were told that he is meticulous,” Carol says. “Everyone that we mentioned his name to said he would do a great job.”

Once they decided to undertake the project, Carol and Jeff thought they might as well take care of another item that had long bothered them. A large white garden tub took up unnecessary space and would be better replaced by a tiled walk-in shower, they decided. Then they could get rid of the cramped, dark shower they already had hiding in a corner by the toilet.

“The tub just sat there and took up space,” Carol says. “In the whole time we've lived here, we've probably used that

tub five or six times ... We prefer showers ... And we have a tub in one of our other bathrooms if we want a tub bath.”

Sitting down with Larry, the Buszkiewiczz brainstormed on big and little touches that they would like in their “dream bathroom.” Surprisingly, they were able to do and to afford many of the items that topped their list.

So the renovation started. The first step was to remove the tub. “I don't know how they did it. I don't know how they got it out of here,” Carol says, gesturing to the regular-sized door connecting the bathroom and the master bedroom. “I just came home from work one day and the tub was gone.”

The old cabinets and prefab shower stall were dismantled, a window was removed from over the tub and the floor was taken up. Tile floor was a must, the Buszkiewiczz decided, and heating the floor would be a much-appreciated luxury that many of their friends urged them to include.



PHOTO Kendall Reeves, Spectrum Studios

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"We knew we wanted tile. That was definite," Carol says. "As soon as I walked in the store, I saw the tile I wanted. I loved that tile so much and did not want to compromise on it. If cuts had to be made, we would make them elsewhere."

A striking combination of smoky blue and white with touches of gray and brown, the rustic Mediterranean tile covers the entire bathroom floor with smaller tile of the same style used for walls on the large walk-in shower. John Du Puis of Ace Tile did the tile work. Set on a timer, the heated floor is a nice touch on winter mornings.

"We get up at 6 a.m., and with the timer, the floors are already warm," Jeff says. "The cats like it, too."

Family felines Abby, Allison and Emily were another concern for the Buszkiewiczzes in doing the bathroom makeover. When some other work had been done on their home, the couple had gathered up their cats each morning and locked them in a guest bedroom. Playing hide and seek each day for the whole renovation period to round up the wise cats before heading off to work was not something Carol and Jeff were relishing.

Instead, project workmen Everett Taylor and Wayne England said they could work around the cats with no problem. "Everett and Wayne cleaned up every day before they left," Carol says. "I told them they didn't have to do that, they could leave their tools and things out because they would be using them the next day, but they always cleaned up."

One nightmare that the Buszkiewiczzes wanted to avoid was having the project started and then weeks would pass without any work being done. "That didn't happen," Carol says. "They were here almost every day. We could come home from work and see progress each day."

The workmen also helped with repair that was not part of the original project, Carol adds. "One day I was sitting here



and felt drops on me," she says, pointing upward to a lovely skylight in the family room. "The skylight was leaking."

Carol discussed the problem with Everett and within days, he had someone come by to fix the problem. Everett also moved the faucets in the master bathroom into a guest bathroom and downstairs powder room when the new ones were added. "During the design phase, I just mentioned to Larry that it would be nice to save the old faucets and Everett changed them," Carol says. "He didn't have to do that. Larry had included my request in his detailed plans and Everett was clearly aware of that."

Because they had never renovated a bathroom before, Carol and Jeff say they relied on Larry to suggest what would work best. "He's a great listener," Carol says. "He listened, then he drew up meticulous plans that reflected the things we wanted."

Touches they appreciate in their new bathroom are light dimmers, night lights, an exhaust, polished chrome faucets, a hold bar and bench in the shower, double shower heads, recessed panels in the shower to hold soap and other items, an easy-to-

clean shower glass and a larger glass block window in the shower. The window allows for privacy and natural light. Double bisque sinks have an interesting angular shape and are mounted under the counter for a stylish appearance.

Cabinets are Brookhaven maple with a warm glaze and the marble countertop features a light brown pattern. Sconces on either side of the two bathroom mirrors add more illumination. To tie the color scheme together, smaller pieces of brown, white, blue and grey tile were used in the shower floor, as well as in a border at the top of the shower walls and as a backing for the recessed shower areas. To complete it all, the walls were painted a soft cream by Dave Harlan of Bedford.

The project started the middle of September and was finished the first week in November. "I was sad when they were gone," Carol says with a laugh. "I was glad to have the bathroom done and thrilled with how beautiful it is, but I really did have separation anxiety. Everett was here so much that he became almost like family and I missed him when he was gone."

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