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Freshen UP

Combine old character with modern design to make a kitchen and bath function for a young family.

BY SUSAN THOMAS SPRINGER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL DYER PHOTOGRAPHY

This kitchen has been opened up to the rest of the downstairs. Streamlined cabinets and countertops keep the design simple and clean. Glossy surfaces make this light-filled kitchen shine. Here the panel over the sink is open to the dining room, allowing the cook to chat with family and friends.

CAN YOU BALANCE VICTORIAN CHARM WITH FRESH DESIGN AND MAKE IT FUNCTION WELL FOR BOTH ADULTS AND LITTLE ONES? ONE SAN FRANCISCO REMODEL SHOWS YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL. When the Libeson family bought their row house, they knew it would be a big project. Typical of Victorian design, the house was dark with small, cramped rooms—not conducive to how the family wanted to cook, dine, play and talk with each other.

But it was in a great location, so they dove in. Feldman Architecture opened up the floor plan, brought in light in creative ways and added some playful elements. Now the house feels airy and serves this active family's needs.

"They are a family that is very close, playful and interactive—and they wanted that expressed in their home," says Jonathan Feldman, AIA, principal of Feldman Architecture.

Floating upper cabinets on a window wall allows for both storage and light. The sleek hood is integrated into the cabinets.

OPEN THE BOX

High on the wish list for this remodel was transforming the floor plan. The family didn't want the cook to be closed off from family and guests, so they removed several interior walls. Now the kitchen and main living spaces allow for movement and conversation.

"We made it much less corridor and compartmentalized—much more of an open, flowing floor plan," says Jonathan.

"Now it's easy to talk to each other," says Kenneth Libeson, who likes the family's ability to visit between the kitchen, dining room and living room.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Thanks to added skylights and the stairwell's new translucent, floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall window, the kitchen and adjoining rooms are swathed in natural light.

"In a row house where you're starved for light, we take it where we can get it," adds Jonathan.

In the kitchen, smart design choices balance the desire for both light and storage. "Floating the upper cabinets in front of a very large window allowed us to get storage and light," says Jonathan.

And instead of choosing a range hood as a focal point, a sleek model almost disappears under the cabinets, letting maximum light shine in. "The hood in this house was one of those products that really allowed us to do something strong with the design," Jonathan adds.

[Checklist] *For a Kid-Friendly Space*

- **Make fixtures accessible for kids.** From the kitchen step stool, kids simply tap the stainless Delta Touch faucet on the spout or handle to start and stop the water, making hand washing easy.
- **Design a desk in the kitchen.** The homeowners wanted a desk in the breakfast nook so they could all be together while doing a variety of activities, such as snacking and doing homework.
- **Keep it simple.** With clean white countertops, streamlined cabinets and cheerful blue paint on the walls, this kitchen remains a calm and happy space on busy days.
- **Create your own accessory.** The homeowners bought a traditional cuckoo clock, and then spray-painted it in playful chrome.
- **Design reachable storage.** Instead of lower kitchen cabinets with doors, the homeowners chose pull-out drawers because they provide good storage and are easily opened by little ones.

This stunning powder room features a reclaimed Douglas fir vanity top, a vessel sink with exposed plumbing and an unexpected floor-to-ceiling mirror. The clean-lined pendant lets the vibrant wallpaper be the star of the room.

GO BOLD WITH THE POWDER ROOM

SINCE YOU AND YOUR GUESTS WILL SEE YOUR POWDER ROOM ONLY OCCASIONALLY, TRY SOME BOLDER ELEMENTS THAN YOU MIGHT IN AN "EVERYDAY" ROOM.

- **REUSE FOUND MATERIALS.** The builder uncovered Douglas fir framing during the demo—perfect for turning into a vanity top that speaks to the home's history.
- **RETHINK MIRROR PLACEMENT.** Not all bathroom mirrors need to be centered above the counter. Here an asymmetrical mirror runs floor to ceiling, adding light and drama.
- **BE PLAYFUL WITH INTERIOR WALLS.** This bold wallpaper looks like a modern take on a floral Victorian motif. Look more closely and see there are actually images of light bulbs hidden in the design.
- **CONSIDER LOCATION.** The ideal spot for a powder room is tucked away and private, yet accessible to the downstairs. With a little reconfiguring, this powder room opens off the hallway.

BE PLAYFUL

One element in the kitchen was inspired by an old sitcom. As fans of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, the Libesons wanted to connect their kitchen with the dining room in similar fashion to the stained glass panel Mary had in her kitchen. So they installed a panel that lifts over the sink, allowing family and guests to talk.

In the kids' bathroom, the towel bars serve an even more important purpose than a place to hang damp towels. Grab bars are stacked floor to ceiling, forming a ladder where kids can burn off some energy. The bars look like a submarine ladder, adding to the nautical theme.

"Because you want to come home and enjoy your time there," Kenneth says, "your house should be fun."

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FELDMAN ARCHITECTURE IS AN AWARD-WINNING DESIGN PRACTICE HEADED BY JONATHAN FELDMAN, AIA, AND BASED IN SAN FRANCISCO. TO LEARN MORE, VISIT FELDMANARCHITECTURE.COM.

[Kid Corner]

A children's bathroom can be both practical and playful. Maximize bath-time fun with splash-proof materials and a design that keeps small ones' height in mind.

- **Be creative with the flooring.** The penny round tile in this children's bath has a contrasting color suggesting flowing water. It isn't expensive to add a design—it just takes imagination and coordination with your tiler.
- **Towels don't have to hang on towel bars.** Here grab bars are stacked like a submarine ladder so kids can literally climb the walls.
- **Consider outside light fixtures for indoor use.** These industrial sconces and warehouse pendant are unexpected choices that fit the nautical theme.
- **Don't sheetrock over potential storage space.** This cubby "carved" into the wall is complete with a shelf, hooks and a different paint color.

A tile floor in shades of blue, port-hole-shaped mirrors and industrial cage sconces bring out the nautical look of this children's bathroom. Created with contrasting penny round tile, a river runs through the floor. A built-in cubby provides storage at just the right height, and a few fishy accessories add to the fun.