



Whatever it Takes

Code conflict forces design team to focus on details rather than size in this Spokane, Wash., bathroom addition

By Kacey Larsen

Thirty-six square feet is barely enough space in which to turn around, let alone enough space to be considered a bathroom. Still, this is what David Hanson, principal at Hanson Carlen Construction in Spokane, Wash., and his team were faced with when taking on a bathroom remodel.

The goal was to turn a master bedroom into a master suite by expanding the existing bathroom. “When you think of a master bedroom, at least for the West Coast, you think of most homes having a typical standard bathroom that you’d find off a hallway with everything in a row. When you think of a master suite, you’re thinking of something that’s a lot more upscale and maybe not only has practical features, but also catches your eye,” Hanson says.

Hanson Carlen had done a kitchen remodel with the clients three years prior, so a certain interpersonal comfort level existed heading into the bathroom project. However, Hanson still asked the couple to

fill out the questionnaire he asks every client to complete before starting the design process. “Each person might have different needs, or different storage requirements. Some couples get ready in the morning together; for others, one person is sleeping while the other is trying to go out the door, so you’re always trying to meet the needs of each family member,” Hanson says.

Back to the Drawing Board

The original direction from the clients for a big addition was the starting point for this Spokane remodel, but that plan would not come to fruition. After getting through the entire concept stage with plans for a



FAST FACTS ABOUT THIS PROJECT

SQUARE FOOTAGE BEFORE: 36 sq. ft. bathroom

SQUARE FOOTAGE AFTER: 115 sq. ft. bathroom

LOCATION: Spokane, Wash.

REMODELER: Hanson Carlen Construction, Spokane

Hanson says options to remodel within the existing space and expand into an adjacent guest bedroom were discussed and then discarded.

Despite the homeowners' initial shock at the county's denial of the first plan, they quickly jumped onboard with the new direction. "Our client believed in us. And so when Ryan, our architect, said, 'The master suite will look this way,' it wasn't questioned. They had a strong belief in what we were doing," Hanson recalls.

The project was revised to work with the existing space, staking out where the pipeline was in the backyard to use every available inch. Hanson says, "When we found [the original addition] couldn't be done that was OK, because in some ways we came up with a plan that made us work a little harder." The result was a 115-sq.-ft. six-cornered addition with a "stepped" exterior design that was mirrored in the interior (see top photo below).

"Details that Matter"

With a final design in place, Hanson says the goal became to add "tons of little details that created an overall feeling when you walked into the room like, 'Wow, this has really been thought through,' and so there were a lot of fun things that we enjoyed doing." With a build time of approximately four months, the design-build firm commenced on the project that is described as having a modern European flair.

To achieve this style, the bathroom was designed with none of its elements touching the floor. The toilet sits off the floor thanks to a hidden wall-mount system, and the custom maple cabinets were made in Hanson Carlen Construction's cabinet shop. It is difficult to buy "off-the-shelf" cabinetry that fits specific spaces, Hanson says, so it made sense for the remodelers to make the cabinets themselves. The cabinets were designed to attach solely to the wall to achieve the floating look but



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had to be strong enough to support the 400-lb. Kenyan marble countertop.

The emphasis on the details, big and small, is evident in how the cabinets are "stepped" to coordinate with the interior and exterior "steps" of the addition. The drawers of the cabinets are illuminated with low-voltage LED lighting. The towel bars are heated and controlled by timers to turn on in the mornings. They are heated using hydronic heat, not electric, which is not typical, Hanson says.

The entire bathroom features hydronic heating, which required the installation of

The custom-made maple cabinets mirror the "stepped" design of the exterior walls and do not touch the floor to keep with the room's modern European flair.

big addition, the project hit a snag when the county vetoed the plans because the proposed addition straddled a 10-ft.-wide utility easement. So, Hanson Carlen Construction was forced to start the design phase from scratch.

The needs for the new design remained the same, but conceptually the designers had to change their thinking. The firm's design-build capabilities allowed the remodeler the benefit of working directly with the architect to ensure the new space met function, design and budget goals.



Hydronically heated towel bars run on timers and a mini-mechanical room was installed in the basement for all the hydronic elements.