

# Craftsman kitchen & bathroom in Sunnyland

In early 2016 Amy Robinson, the owner of [3 Oms Yoga](#), worked with Chuckanut Builders to remodel their new studio on Cornwall Avenue. A year later her family hired them to remodel their kitchen and bathroom. Built in 1908, the home is a classic Craftsman style in Bellingham's Sunnyland Neighborhood.



*Amy Robinson and her daughters in their charming, newly remodeled kitchen. Photo credit: [Damian Vines](#).*

The scope of the two projects were obviously quite different, but the overarching goals were the same, to build healthy and durable spaces that they will use and love for many years to come.

## How it all started

The original layout of the kitchen was...awkward. The bathroom was off of the kitchen, there were 6 doorways leading into and out of the kitchen, and it was tiny to boot. Michelle Banks, of Spiral Studios, redesigned the kitchen and main floor bathroom, opened the kitchen to the dining room, and removed 3 of the doorways in the kitchen. As a result, there is now more natural light in the space, more sensible and accessible kitchen storage, and a lovely new en-suite bedroom on the main level

Chuckanut Builders starts all of their projects by gathering a team. From start to finish their projects are highly collaborative, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of everyone involved. Their integrated design process helps with budget management, project planning, and offers specialists the opportunity to suggest building performance upgrades during the design process.

## The team:

- Interior Designer: [Spiral Design Studios](#)
- General Contractor: [Chuckanut Builders](#)
- Cabinet maker: [Renew Woods](#)
- Location: Sunnyland Neighborhood, Bellingham, WA

## Green Building Details

One of the greenest features of this project is something that many folks might overlook: the fact that the homeowners opted to not build an addition. While many clients might have chosen that route, Amy, Cam (her husband) and their designer instead found creative ways to re-imagine the existing space. In doing so, they reduced the overall cost of their project, shortened the construction period and reduced the overall carbon footprint of their project (and their home). That sounds like a win on every front!

Within the footprint of the project, the team focused on one other key aspect of green building: healthy indoor air quality. The importance of improving indoor air quality cannot be overstated. On average, the air quality in homes is 2-5 times worse than outdoor air. [You read that right](#). Poor quality indoor air is making people sick. These pollutants come from activities like cooking and showering and from products like carpet and mattresses and are made worse in spaces with inadequate ventilation.

The plan for healthy indoor air quality starts with increasing ventilation to bring fresh air in and carry indoor air pollutants (such as mold) out. It also includes carefully selecting building products that are less detrimental to indoor air quality, i.e. green building materials.

It can be tricky to define what makes a building material green. There are many lists and rating systems for different types of products and for different areas of the country (and the world). Regardless, there are some common themes: how and where the materials are manufactured (the closer to home the better), the durability of the materials, and their potential to poorly impact indoor air quality.

For Amy and Cam's project, they added ventilation in both the kitchen and bathroom, and made modest improvements to the building envelope, which will reduce the potential for moisture and mold in the future. All of the finishes were zero VOC (volatile organic compounds) and carpet (a major contributor to indoor air pollution) was not installed.

### The nitty-gritty

- Custom cabinets—[Renew Woods](#), a Bellingham-based cabinet shop, built reclaimed fir cabinets for Amy and Cam. Renew Woods' tagline is, "A New Life for Old Timbers". Their beautiful custom cabinets highlight the natural beauty of wood by carefully selecting timbers with the perfect amount of character and patina, resulting in cabinets that are truly works of art.
- Countertops—The countertops are engineered quartz by [Pental](#). Engineered quartz is a manmade material made almost entirely from Quartz. It is exceptionally durable and nonporous and is naturally resistant to abrasion, scratches, dents, and even acids without the need for sealants. Quartz is an abundant material, it is nontoxic and nonallergenic, and it will last a lifetime.
- Reclaimed fir floor— The original flooring in the kitchen was fir, although it was hiding under layers of linoleum! After peeling back the layers everyone realized the flooring was in decent shape and just needed to be refinished.

Tile—The tile on this project is such a fun detail AND it is environmentally friendly! The bathroom floor is [encaustic cement tile](#), which uses basic earth components, natural pigments and minimal energy (except elbow grease!) The subway tile in the kitchen is from [United Tile](#) and the hex-tile backsplash in the kitchen is by [Daltile](#). Both companies



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are committed to doing business in an environmentally responsible manner and have undertaken initiatives to do so.

## The Kitchen

It's fair to say that the original kitchen was dated, lacked adequate storage and was more of a thoroughfare than a room.

To reimagine the space, two major structural changes were necessary: removing the wall dividing the kitchen from the dining room and making the bathroom only accessible from the guest room. These changes increased the useable space in the kitchen, brought in more natural light and created cohesion between the living room and dining room.



*Kitchen before, facing the kitchen sink and stove.*



*Amy and Cam's kitchen after the remodel (same view as above). Photo credit: [Damian Vines](#).*

Prior to the remodel, this corner was mostly wasted space. The doorways lead to the bathroom and laundry room, but there was no space for storage or seating. By relocating the bathroom door to the adjacent guest bedroom, they created a great en-suite room on the main level, eliminated one of the doors in the kitchen, and utilized the new space as a pantry and refrigerator wall. One of the greenest aspects of this project was the creative use of existing space; this wall is a great example of that.



*Kitchen before, facing the bathroom and laundry room.*



*Creative reuse of this space made room for more accessible pantry storage. (Similar view as the before photo – use the corner doors as an anchor point) Photo credit: Damian Vines.*



*The natural patina of the reclaimed fir cabinets and shelving add character to the space. Renew Woods built both and sourced the shelving materials from the Old Seattle Times building. Photo credits: [Damian Vines](#).*



*The family loves their new island. It is a great space for meal prep as well as for homework and catching up on the day. Photo credits: [Damian Vines](#).*



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## The Bathroom

The original bathroom needed an update. While the overall footprint stayed the same, it looks and feels much bigger even though they actually added a shower! The combination of bold, fun floor tile, a glass shower partition, and built-in niches, for both the bathtub and shower, resulted in a beautiful, super functional bathroom.

They were able to re-use the vintage cast iron tub, by relocating it and updating the color. Clustering the sink and toilet also increase the feeling of openness in the space.

*Bathroom before, as seen from the kitchen.*



*After remodel (same view as before photo). The door to the guest room is now at the foot of the tub on the left-hand wall! Photo credits: [Damian Vines](#).*



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*The glass partition adds the functionality of a shower without interrupting the open feel of the space. Photo credits: [Damian Vines](#).*

Creative use of space is often the answer in many of Bellingham's charming, older homes. It's not that they are too small, but they were built at a time when lifestyles were different. 100 years ago, kitchens and laundry rooms were often hidden away in the back of the home, and it was quite common to divide the indoor space into many tiny rooms.

Now, we prefer more open spaces in our homes, with one space blending into the next, and the kitchen is often the room where we gather with family and guests. Sometimes the solution means thinking inside the box, rather than make the box bigger. For Amy and Cam, a few out of place walls and doorways were all that was standing between them and their durable, beautiful and healthy new kitchen.