



DOWNSIZING INTO A SMALLER HOME does not have to be traumatizing. Take this elegant Dennisport renovation, for example: When facing retirement, the homeowner concluded that the upkeep on her oceanfront property was too much to handle, so she reconsidered moving to a cottage colony she already owned but had never lived in.

By Laurie Higgins • Photography by Dan Cutrona

A backsplash of clear glass tiles adds depth to the kitchen and reflects the green from the granite countertop.

She purchased the cottage colony in the early 1990s to use as a family compound. It consisted of two units that each had three 500-square-foot apartments. The homeowner's parents lived in one apartment, an aunt and uncle in another, and her brother combined two apartments into one for himself, an idea that appealed to her when it came time to downsize. A center court area between the two units was used for outdoor get-togethers.



An enclosed porch that ran the length of both units was converted into an entryway, breakfast nook, laundry closet and a half bath for much-needed extra space.

Following her brother's lead, the homeowner combined two of the apartments to create a 1,000-square-foot home.

"I loved the experience I had with McPhee Associates," she says, referring to the oceanfront house McPhee Associates of Cape Cod built for her 16 years ago.

"So I asked them if they would be willing to do the renovation, not knowing if they would do small projects. They said they were willing."

Even though she was moving into a smaller space, the homeowner wanted to retain some of the custom features from her oceanside home. The ornate trim work and three-quarter paneling in the living room mimic details in her former great room. Craftsman-style moldings around the windows with three-panel transoms above, and a single column separating the small entryway from the living room are other architectural details she had loved in her former house.

RENOVATION



Above: A wood-burning fireplace is the focal point of the condominium's wide-open living area. Right and facing page: To save money, the homeowner purchased bathroom vanities from IKEA and assembled them herself for a clean look that's also affordable.

Hitting the high notes

One of the most dramatic changes McPhee made to the unit was opening up the ceiling to the rafters, leaving the beams exposed. It creates a sense of soaring space in the wide-open floor plan. The homeowner wanted a wood-burning fireplace, so McPhee installed a metal fireplace insert and covered it with fieldstones. Perched on a raised slate hearth, the fireplace can be seen from the kitchen. Adding a sentimental touch, the plant that McPhee Associates gave the homeowner when they built her former house adorns the hearth.

"Basically, we took the insides of two units and gutted them down to the studs," says Rob McPhee, president of McPhee Associates. "We moved walls around, raised the roof, reinsulated the whole thing and reframed new walls."

To create more space without altering the roofline, McPhee converted an enclosed porch that ran the length of both units into an entryway, a breakfast nook, a laundry closet and a half bath. Other space-saving techniques include a full wall of shelving for books and collectibles with storage cabinets underneath. Because the apartment only has one bedroom, a Murphy bed in the living room was the perfect solution for times when company visits.

The homeowner wanted the job to be affordable, so a lot of her choices were do-it-yourself projects. For example, she bought all of the kitchen cabinets and both bathroom vanities at Ikea and assembled them herself. It took her over 60 hours, but it saved her money that she could put toward more expensive details that were important to her.

"We're willing to work with people," says McPhee. "This homeowner knew what she wanted. It made it very easy."



Wow factor: Top-notch tiles

One of the features that she insisted on having was custom tile from The Tilery at Tree's Place in Orleans. In the kitchen she chose clear glass one-inch-by-two-inch tiles for the backsplash. The tiles add depth and reflect the green from the granite countertop. For the floor in the half bath and laundry closet, she opted for porcelain tiles in earth tones that look like slate but wear like iron.

The entryway has striated porcelain tiles and the full bath has porcelain tiles with a wave-like texture to prevent slippage. The standup shower stall features inexpensive subway tiles with a border of glass and natural stone tiles mini-bricks as an accent.

"For me, one of the really nice things about working with McPhee Associates is that I was trying to do it affordably," the homeowner says. "I'm older and I'm watching my finances now, and they helped me do that." 

in the details



1 Shower accent design is comprised of mother of pearl and glass "Tyrol" mosaic tile from The Tilery at Tree's Place in Orleans.



2 Also from the Tilery is the kitchen backsplash made of one-by-two-inch gloss white glass mosaic tile.



3 Granite countertops in the kitchen were purchased and custom cut by Cape Cod Marble & Granite in Hyannis.



4 Custom millwork by McPhee Associates can be seen in the kitchen and throughout the home.