

Home



AFTER: Peggy McKevitt of St. Paul chose to go a little more contemporary with her kitchen in the duplex she shares with her sister.

SUSAN GILMORE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sibling remodelery

Duplex-living sisters redo kitchens, and you can see them on this home tour

By Molly Guthrey
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A duplex is a way for families to live together but also apart. This living arrangement has worked for the McKevitt sisters of St. Paul since 1989.

"It's been a good solution for us," says Peggy McKevitt, "each having our own place, but we share lawn work and snow shoveling. We also have a common washer and dryer in the basement, but other than that, we have separate entrances."

It also makes it easier when it comes time to remodel: Each sister can get her own

way. "My style is more traditional," says Susan McKevitt, "and hers is a little more contemporary."

The sisters hired David Heide Design Studio to help them remodel the cramped kitchens of their 1926 Arts & Crafts duplex on Jefferson Avenue in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. The two kitchens will be on display this weekend as part of the 30th annual Minneapolis & Saint Paul Home Tour.

"It was just time," Susan says of the outdated kitchens. "Something had to be done."

Through the years, the sis-

ters had focused on their careers — Susan is a registered nurse, Peggy has worked in human resources. Their co-owned duplex has always been a sturdy backdrop to their lives: "It's a true duplex (one unit up and one unit down), built in 1926, structurally sound," says Susan. The sisters have done some updating through the years: After they bought the duplex in the 1980s, they ripped out the wall-to-wall carpeting, refinishing the hardwood floors underneath; they also remodeled each of their bathrooms in 2002; they replaced the roof.

Until now, the kitchens had



BEFORE: Peggy McKevitt's kitchen before renovation began.

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Peggy McKevitt



Susan McKevitt

only been tweaked.

"We had both put in wallpaper, we had both put in dishwashers, we had both replaced a refrigerator," Peggy says.

"It was minor decorating rather than structural changes," says Susan. "The lower kitchen — Peggy's — had had some remodeling (prior to 1989). Mine was older — it

had a metal sink and no cupboards. I had a few cabinets made for mine, nothing major."

"There was nothing really wrong with the kitchens," says Peggy. "They just needed to be updated."

Thanks to going on previous home tours through the years, the sisters knew who they wanted to hire for the renovations.

"We had always liked David Heide," says Peggy. "I think he has a good sense of how to put a new kitchen in an old house and make it look like it fits. He has a good use of col-

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> Kitchens

or, too — neither of us wanted a white kitchen."

The kitchens were reworked with the help of Kyle Veldhouse, an architect on staff at the studio.

Before, the two kitchens were typical of the cramped and closed-off kitchens in old apartments in St. Paul. Now, thanks to partially opening up a wall in each kitchen, the kitchens appear lighter and bigger.

"That was the biggest decision," says Heide. "At first, they didn't want to do that — and we were truthfully ambivalent about it. We wanted to give the client what they wanted. But, because it was important that they understand the choice, we worked to explain to them the nature between the spaces and the sight lines, how it would give them more of an experience of windows around them. Once we convinced them that it wouldn't be done in a way that would be sacrilegious to the rest of the unit, they were able to get behind it. And I think the way that we detailed the lower portions of the oak walls and trimmed the openings really helps define them as separate spaces while allowing a visual connection to the rest of the unit."

Although Heide says that kitchen remodels can typically cost as much as "three or four new cars," the sisters did their best to keep costs down.

"We didn't move the plumbing, mechanicals or electrical," says Susan. "We kept the floor plans the same. The kitchens are so small, you can't move anything around, anyway. And even if we had wanted to, there was a staircase in the way."

The kitchens are much more stylish now: Stainless steel appliances, stone coun-



AFTER: Susan McKevitt went for a more traditional look for her kitchen redesign.

SUSAN GILMORE PHOTOGRAPHY



BEFORE: Susan McKevitt's kitchen before renovation.

DHD STUDIO

tertops, open cabinetry, farmhouse sinks.

"Our friends are always surprised at how much bigger the kitchens look — even though they're still the exact same size," says Peggy.

The style of each kitchen is different, though.

Peggy's kitchen, on the first floor, features a contemporary look of blue subway tile, gray soapstone countertops and a combination of blue and white cabinetry. Susan's

more traditional kitchen on the second floor has a green and cream color scheme with bead board paneling and granite countertops. Both have hardwood flooring that is original to the duplex (although Peggy's flooring looks newer because had been covered with vinyl tiles).

"It's a fun opportunity for people to see two different takes on the same solution," says Heide.

IF YOU GO

What: Minneapolis & Saint Paul Home Tour

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. today, 1-5 p.m. Sunday

Cost: Free

Detail: Now in its 30th year, this annual event shows "real homes, real people, real ideas." Residents in both cities open their doors to show practical ideas for remodeling every room in the house, creative ways of finding or adding space or building new to stay in the urban neighborhoods they love. This year, there are 52 homes and special locations open for free, self-guided tours. At many of the stops, contractors, architects and other tradespeople as well as homeowners will be available to answer questions. Several locations will offer brief, organized topic talks or tours.

Two sisters, one duplex: Susan McKevitt, 1601 Jefferson Ave., No. 33 on the tour, and Peggy McKevitt, 1599 Jefferson Ave., No. 34 on the tour, illustrate how similar kitchens (located in a co-owned duplex) can be remodeled differently.

Info: MSPHomeTour.com

But even though the sisters now have two new kitchens, sometimes they only need one. Like last weekend.

"On Sunday, we went shopping at Talbot's and then Susan cooked salmon for dinner," says Peggy.

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