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HOMES

& GARDENING



Sisters who share a St. Paul duplex remodel their small kitchens simultaneously — each in her own style.



KITCHEN DUET

By KIM PALMER
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When Susan and Peggy McKevitt bought their Arts and Crafts duplex 28 years ago, they accepted the cramped kitchens that came with each unit. The sisters were thrilled to have a home of their own in the location they wanted: St. Paul's Macalester-Groveland neighborhood.

"It was an economic decision," said Susan. "We wanted to stop renting."

The housing market was tight, and mortgage interest rates were flirting with double digits. "We were happy to assume a 9 percent mortgage."

The two kitchens shared identical floor plans and little else.

Peggy's kitchen, in the lower unit, had been recently remodeled by the previous owner, though not to her liking. "Everything was brown," she said. Also, the radiator had been removed, making the room chilly as well as dark.

Upstairs, Susan's kitchen was older. In fact, it still had some of its original 1920s cabinets, an iron sink and vinyl tiles on the floor.



Sisters Susan, left, and Peggy McKevitt renovated both their kitchens in their St. Paul duplex at the same time.

From top: Peggy's kitchen has a cool contemporary vibe with blue-painted cabinets, blue-tile backsplash, soapstone countertops and graphic-print wallpaper.

Susan's version uses beadboard paneling, white-enameled cabinets and a sage green color scheme for a classic traditional look.

Portrait by DAVID JOLIS • StarTribune
Kitchen photos by Susan Gilmore

Both women soon added dishwashers, replaced their refrigerators and tried to make some cosmetic improvements relying heavily on wallpaper. But last year, they decided it was time for a more dramatic makeover.

"Something had to be done," said Susan.

"We needed new appliances," said Peggy. "Once you start down that road, before you know it, you're knocking down walls."

The sisters knew who they wanted to work with: David Heide Design Studio, whose projects they had admired on various neighborhood home tours. "We always liked his work," said Susan, especially his ability to design a new kitchen that looked at home in an old house.

The sisters weren't sure Heide would be interested in taking on a project as small as theirs — each kitchen was 110 square feet.

But "the excitement and enthusiasm of Peggy and Susan won me over," he said. And creating a functional modern kitchen in a tiny footprint would be an interesting challenge. "Working with such small spaces requires a greater amount of creativity."

The sisters had no illusions about magi-
See **SISTERS** on H5 ▶

Time to beautify your boulevard

Boulevard plantings can enhance curb appeal and benefit the environment

By RHONDA FLEMING HAYES
Special to the Star Tribune

Consider the boulevard — that narrow buffer between the street and the sidewalk, usually a bland band of grass concealing an underground network of gas pipes, sewer lines and cables.

To some gardeners, it's a hell-strip, an awkward botanical no man's land, suitable only for sod.

But a growing number of urban gardeners are seeing opportunity and prime real estate ripe for planting. In older neighborhoods with mature trees, often the boulevard is the only sunny, level spot on one's property. And a boulevard planting, at its best, can be an extension of your front garden, a welcoming first impression that beautifies the street, reduces runoff and facilitates neighborly interaction. Think of it as an attractive setting for those lingering Minnesota goodbyes.

Technically, you own the boulevard, but it's an easement that your city has the right to excavate should utility problems arise. Keep this in mind before you begin gardening, since the city is not obligated to repair any damage if this occurs. In addition there are regulations and other practical issues to consider before you proceed to plant. Rule No. 1: Notify Gopher State One Call (651-454-0002, gopherstateonecall.org) before you dig. It's free, and now there's a 24/7 app available. No excuses.

Know the rules

While boulevard garden rules vary from city to city, Minneapolis code prohibits growing of edibles, weeds or "noxious plants" on the boulevard, unless a permit for such is issued by the city. Flowers and grasses are fair game.

However, in Minneapolis, boulevard plantings are required to max out at 36 inches in height and to not exceed 18 inches in height within 20 feet of any intersection, alley or driveway approach. This is not the city trying to stifle your horticultural aspirations but a safety precaution, so there is no sight obstruction.

Boulevards take a lot of abuse from road salt, snow load, litter and other pollution — a good reason for the no-edibles clause. Any boulevard plantings will have to allow for those hazards, as well as car doors, foot traffic and trash cans. This is not the place to plant delicate lady slippers.

See **BOULEVARD** on H3 ▶



RHONDA FLEMING HAYES

Prettying up a boulevard isn't a bad idea; just make sure you know the rules for your city.

KITCHEN DUET

◀ **SISTERS** from HI

cally transforming their modest spaces into gigantic trophy kitchens, given what they had to work with.

"They are the size they are," said Susan. "We weren't going to get all the things you see in the magazines."

The right thing to do

Working with project architect Kyle Veldhouse, Heide presented three plans, with the most aggressive calling for removal of the non-load-bearing wall that separated the kitchen from the dining room and replacing it with a partial wall.

"We mulled it over," said Susan. Opening up the space to let in more light intrigued both sisters, and they were surprised to find out how little cost it would add to the total project.

"We had quite a lengthy discussion about opening the wall," said Heide. "Typically, that's not something we do. I try to steer people to respect the building. But if the building isn't allowed to change and evolve, it becomes obsolete, an even bigger danger. Given how small the kitchens were, and how cut off, it seemed like the right thing to do."

The sisters had similar budgets and both wanted to update their kitchens with new finishes and materials without changing the basic layout. Using the same plan for both kitchens was the most cost-effective option, as was tackling both projects simultaneously rather than staggering them to keep one kitchen operational.

"Doing it together made it go faster," said Susan. "It's the same plan but two totally different looks" — to reflect their distinctly different styles.

"Mine is more contemporary," said Peggy, the younger sibling, who chose blue-painted cabinets, soapstone countertops, a blue-tile backsplash and a graphic-print wallpaper.

"Mine is more old-fashioned," said Susan, who opted for classic traditional details including beadboard paneling, a honed granite countertop, white enameled cabinets and a sage green color scheme. She also wallpapered her ceiling.

"That was David's idea," she said. "We wanted them different. I love it!" (Both sisters were able to keep and refinish their existing wood floors.)

The dining-room side of both partial walls became an attractive focal point, with the addition of new oak paneling detailed to echo the Craftsman-style doors on the sisters' matching built-in buffets.

Trade-offs

Losing the full wall allowed the sisters to add 2½ feet of additional countertop space, but it cost them a bit of storage. That was a catalyst to do an inventory of their cookware and dishes and pare down, said Peggy. "I had duplicates. It pushed you to get down to essentials."

While they were updating their kitchens, they also decided to improve the back hall and staircase that connected the two spaces. They added carpet, repaired wall-board, extended the stair railing and repainted in a creamy yellow and blue-green color scheme, a bridge between the palettes of their respective



AFTER

BEFORE



BEFORE



AFTER



Above For the kitchen makeovers, they replaced a full wall with a partial wall to let in more light. New Craftsman-style paneling covers the dining room sides of both partial walls.

Left "Everyone says it looks bigger," said Susan McKeivitt, left, of their kitchens, even though the footprint hasn't changed.

Before photos provided; kitchen photos by Susan Gilmore; portrait by DAVID JOLIS • Star Tribune

ing running water in your kitchen and washing dishes in the bathroom sink."

But when the projects were completed in late October, the sisters were thrilled with the final results, especially the way natural light now flows into the space. "Everyone says it looks bigger," said Susan of their kitchens, even though the footprint hasn't changed.

Both kitchens are also much more functional, they agreed. "Everything is very convenient," said Peggy.

"You're not trying to stand on your head to get something out of the cabinet."

And the opened-up kitchens have changed the way they live in their home, making entertaining more enjoyable.

"We're more likely to have people over," said Peggy. "People can be milling around, and you can be in the conversation."

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Pro tips for an organized pantry

By MICHELLE GUERRERE
Tribune News Service

Have you ever met someone who had the most perfectly arranged pantry? If so, it was likely as if you had walked into a wonderland. But why is it that this level of organization triggers that response?

"Without proper organization behind the scenes, people can never truly have their homes feel like the haven they set out to create," says Carly Waters, an L.A.-based interior designer and, by default, professional organizer. Waters has seen it all when it comes to her clients, including one avid baker's collection of more than 20 different types of flour and numerous other unknowing food hoarders. The organization guru says she likes to think about a pantry the way others think of closets: The more you have, the less you'll use. "The idea behind the capsule wardrobe can be transferred to your pantry," she says. "Have your set food staples, and make them stand out." But before you can start on the fun stuff, there are a few things to be done. With Waters' help, we've rounded up five tips for how to organize your pantry like a pro:

1. Empty: Take everything off the shelves. Since you likely haven't seen the bare shelves in a while, now is a good time to give them a good wipe so they're extra clean, Waters says.

2. Sort: "Remember those matching games from when you were a kid?" asks Waters. "This is just like that." Put all the grains with the grains, legumes with the legumes and so forth. When you're finished sorting, there should be piles of each food category.

3. Edit: This is the time where you need to decide between tossing or keeping each item. First, start by checking expiration dates — if something's old or smells off, chuck it. Next, evaluate which items you'll never use and donate those to charity. Then, Waters suggests getting creative. For example, if you have a collection of half-empty liquor bottles that you only use occasionally, create a bar and display those bottles as decor.

4. Relocate: Your pantry should only contain food, so any random items that ended up in there must be returned to their proper homes. Waters is a big proponent of displaying items that traditionally are kept in the pantry — for instance, she loves setting up a tea or coffee station on the counter. "Use those items to design your space," she says. "Make your home feel like your favorite hotel room."

5. Decant: Here's where you get to break out the label maker. Remove all food from its packaging and fill up glass jars with airtight lids to keep food and ingredients fresh. She says you can decant anything — from spices to toothpicks. Lastly, label each jar so you can easily spot it among your array of goodies.