

Bathroom remodel makes the most of a small space

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

After living in her small Georgetown condo for 20 years, Eileen McCarthy, who concedes she might procrastinate a bit, decided it was finally time to remodel, so she started with her least favorite room, the bath.

"Everything was wearing out. The faucet leaked. The sink itself, the cabinet and the laminate on it were starting to crack," McCarthy said. "I had to remodel and it didn't make any sense to do it piecemeal."

McCarthy enlisted the help of interior designer Charles C. Almonte, who transformed her 45-square-foot bath from decrepit to delightful.

McCarthy lives at McLean Gardens Condominiums. Built in 1942 to house World War II defense workers, the property was turned into rentals and then converted into condominiums in 1981.

A busy attorney, McCarthy ignored her deteriorating digs for years until the single bath in the house became nearly unusable. "The bathroom was the room I liked the least," McCarthy said. "It was all-white. I wanted something more peaceful, modern and functional."

She selected Almonte through Designers Network, a service that matches homeowners to interior designers that best fit their needs and style.

"I always thought I needed a designer because I can't visualize things. I watch the design shows on television and most of my trepidation was that I would be pushed into doing something I didn't really like simply because it was trendy," she said.



BEFORE: Eileen McCarthy decided it was time to remodel the bathroom in her small Georgetown condo where she had lived for 20 years.

Instead Almonte guided McCarthy through the process, making sure the result reflected her personal style. After gutting the entire bath, they decided to go green; figuratively and literally.

They painted the walls with Benjamin Moore's Brookside Moss green. A window in the bathroom looks out over a wooded area. They installed a new energy-efficient toilet.

The floor is 12-inch-by-24-inch ceramic tile from Daltile in alternating rice paper and sprout colors that create a natural fabriclike texture.

"That's my favorite thing about the bathroom," McCarthy said. "[Almonte] picked it out and showed it to me. It's just beautiful. It looks like a piece of cloth."

Almonte said people commonly make the mistake of going with smaller tiles when selecting floors



AFTER PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARNIK/EXAMINER

for a smaller bath. "I think the bigger tiles make the room look larger," he said. "And you have fewer grout lines."

The old vanity was large and

obstructed the entrance. By mounting the sink faucet in the wall, Almonte was able to use a slim coffee/coriander-colored vanity with a top-mounted basin.



AFTER: After gutting the entire space, the room got a fresh coat of paint, a deep tub, an energy-efficient toilet, a ceramic-tile floor and a new vanity/sink. Now the bath has an open feel and a beautiful, finished look.

McCarthy's counter is icestone, an engineered stone made from recycled glass. "It's typically expensive, but because we were working with a small space we were able to get a remnant and splurge," Almonte said.

She also went with an Archer tub by Kohler, which is deeper than a standard model and has a garden tub look. Molding around the ceiling and polished brass hardware add a touch of luxury.

To finish off the look, McCarthy chose a satinlike shower curtain in sage and chocolate to hang from a curved shower curtain rod. Almonte said going with a curved shower curtain rod over a glass enclosure makes a smaller bath feel more open.

"When you are in the shower, it gives you the illusion that there is more space around you," he said.

McCarthy was so pleased with the result that she asked Almonte to start on the rest of her place.

"I wasn't sure what to expect," McCarthy said about using a designer. "It's amazing how it all came together."

Changing toilet location may be a bad move

By Ed Del Grande
HGTVP.com

Q: I'm going to remodel our master bathroom in the very near future, and wanted to check in with you with a few questions before we do anything drastic. I'd like to move the toilet from one side of the bathroom to the other. On top of completely changing the location of the toilet, this would also move the toilet about 8 feet away from the main plumbing vent stack.

Is this toilet move even possible? If so, can I do the move myself, or is this one for the pros? What about pitch and cutting through floor joists?

Thank you very much for any help! - Dave in Ohio

A: Before we get into the meat and potatoes of all your questions, let's start things out with one of the most important topics of remodeling that many homeowners overlook. And that's pulling the proper building permits for the job.

In most areas, outside of painting and wall papering, you'll need to meet with your local building inspector to discuss what permits may be needed before you start work. Keep in mind that construction inspections can protect homeowners from poor work or mistakes that may have been overlooked. So, having a professional inspector checking your job

from start to finish is well worth the fee for permits.

Bottom line: Don't cut corners by cutting out the required permits. Now, let's get to all your questions:

Yes, moving the location of a toilet is usually possible, but is it practical? What I mean by that is when you move large 3- or 4-inch drain lines even a few feet, the cost can really bite into the entire budget of the job. My advice when it comes to moving the location of a toilet is to take a good look and see if you can design your new bathroom around the toilet's present location. Basically, if you can't bring the mountain to you, then you go to the mountain.

If you can get a nice design around your present toilet location, this



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Moving the location of a toilet is usually possible, but is it practical? Before you do anything, meet with an inspector to discuss what permits may be needed.

allows you to spend more money on your finish work and fixtures, where it really counts.

However, I understand that there may be some cases where the toilet will have to be moved. For instance, if my wife tells me she wants the

toilet moved. For that, if you're not a plumber, you should call a professional plumber. Whenever you deal with a main toilet line and vent stack, you're talking hard-core plumbing, and a licensed master plumber is the right person for this job.

Things like proper drain pitch, cutting and drilling around wood supports, then reconnecting everything back to the main stack need to be completed according to local codes.

Believe it or not, that loops us all the way back to the topic of building permits, where we started. So, you might say this question was kind of like a successful plumbing remodeling project. Because when the job was finished, all our loose ends were properly tied in together.

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