

A modern dining room with a dark teal wall. In the foreground, a rectangular wooden dining table is set with white plates, gold cutlery, and a centerpiece of dried flowers. White chairs with wooden legs are tucked under the table. To the left, a kitchen island with a white countertop and wooden base is visible. The background features a dark teal wall with a large, gold, starburst-shaped chandelier and a woven tapestry. A wooden sideboard with a dark top holds various decorative items, including vases and a small sculpture. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

An Enduring Nordic Spirit



NARI Minnesota - 2023 COTY Awards

PROJECT: Hyland Hills

CATEGORY: Residential Interior Under 100K

Goals of the Project

A top-to-bottom overhaul.

1

To achieve a more minimalistic lifestyle

2

To create space for the client's Scandinavian heritage and heirloom pieces to be appreciated

3

To create a more functional kitchen workspace with improved storage and counter space

4

To connect the living, dining and kitchen for more comfortable entertaining

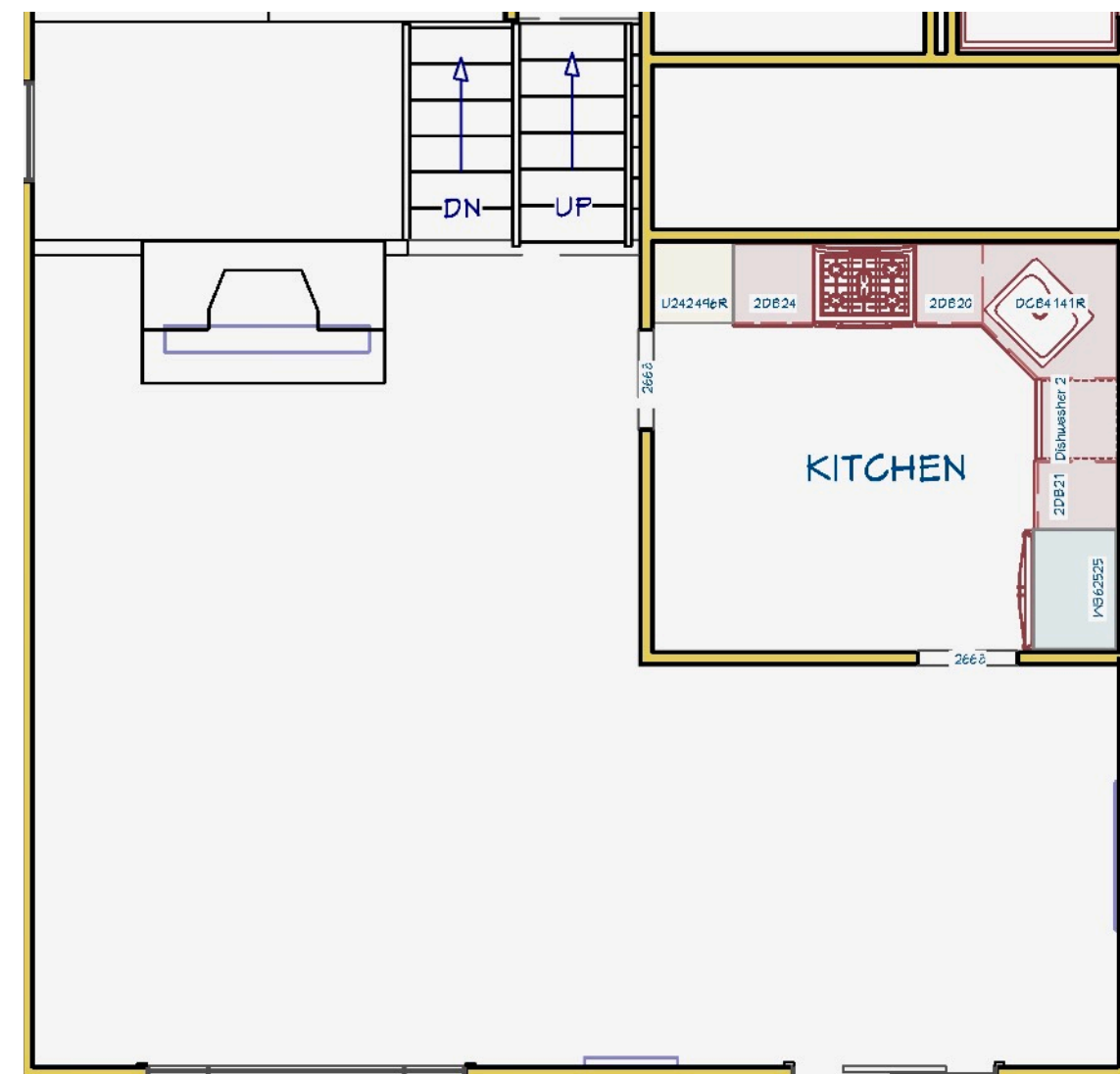


Getting Started

When we first met this client, she shared her love of Midcentury-Modern Design and her struggle to express it, while honoring the architecture of her 1970's home. She yearned for a more minimalistic lifestyle, but was overwhelmed with the amount of stuff she possessed from a life rich with travel and deep family heritage. We looked through her amazing collection of original artwork that was dear to her, the collectibles and heirlooms that she cherished and imagined ways to properly use or display them.

The property had old carpeting run throughout the dining and living rooms which was in need of replacement. It lacked sufficient lighting, so the spaces felt dark and tired.

The home needed a lot of work, so we set a game plan to tackle it over the course of several phases, allowing her time to process and evaluate each of her possessions. She worked with a professional organizer who helped her systematically tackle each space and rethink her storage solutions as we went.



Before Kitchen, Dining, + Living Room Layout





The as-built kitchen had only the pictured walls of cabinetry and counter space built in on the fridge and range wall. It lacked sufficient work space and also adequate storage. The client had brought in a temporary wheeled cart to help provide a little more storage and work space against the opposite wall of the kitchen, but it left a lot to be desired in achieving a functional kitchen. In the living room, the original 1970's fireplace was in very good shape, and brought a strong architectural anchor to the property, along with a fun vintage vibe. We decided to keep it as-is, but add a mantle and a cleaned up room arrangement for hosting and entertaining.



Kitchen + Living Before



Phase 1

Phase 1 was to replace all of the flooring throughout the main floor. We upgraded all of the interior doors and casing, and gave the whole space a fresh coat of paint.

Then we furnished the dining, living, and upstairs loft. While the scope sounds pretty straightforward, the work that the client had to do to relocate and either purge or

store all of her belongings was significant. And it was a necessary first hurdle to clear before we could dig into the adjacent spaces.

As phase one construction was underway, we dialed in the layout and selections for the kitchen and began procurement for phase two.



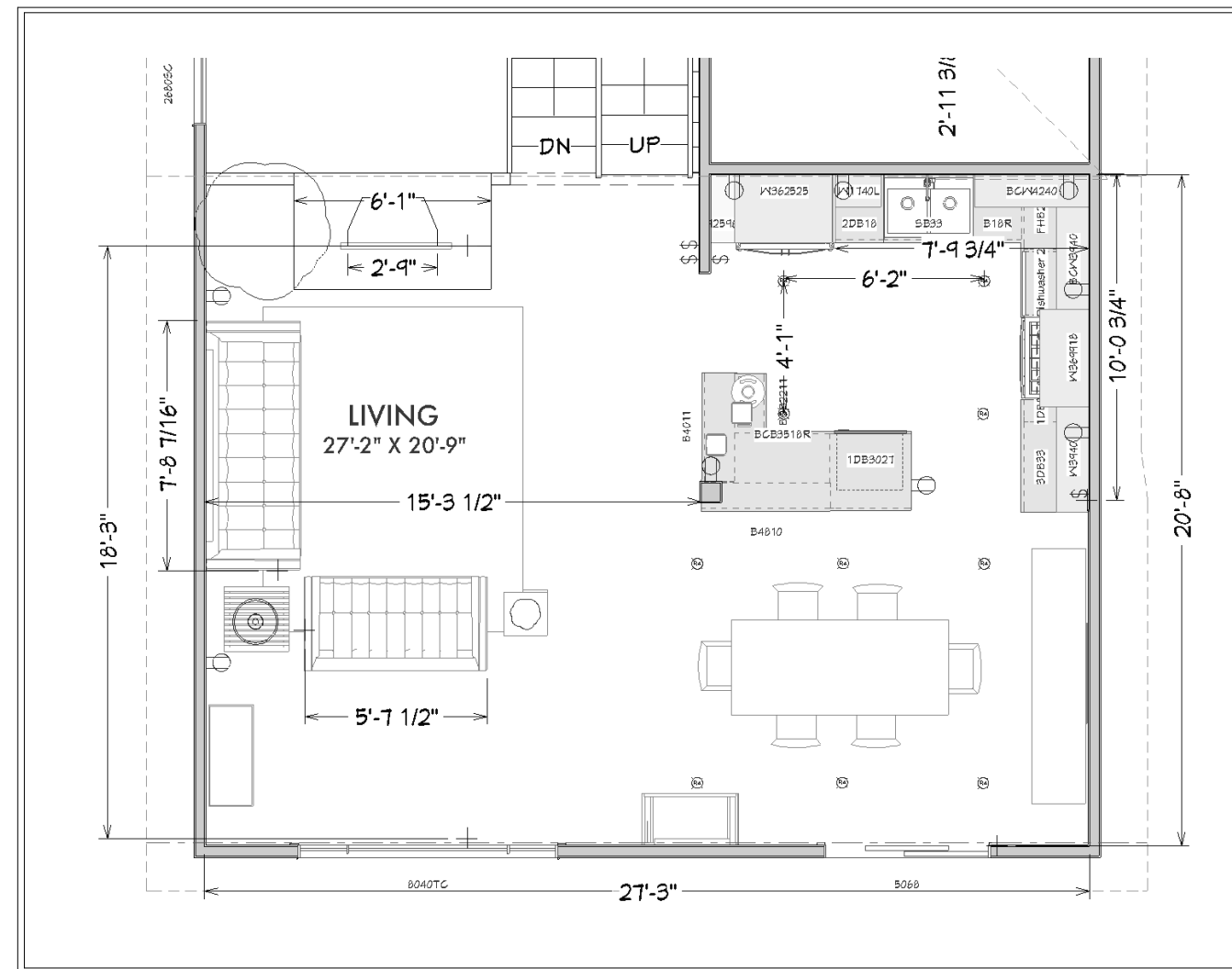
Phase 2

In Phase 2, we tackled the kitchen. We helped her weigh the cost-benefit ratio of a few scenarios in scope and budget. While her neighborhood is fairly modest, the potential for gain with a more open layout was significant on a personal and return-on-investment front.

She ultimately decided to open both walls entirely to the dining and living areas, remove the soffits and dropped ceiling that contributed to the small feel of the kitchen, and just keep the structural post in the corner of the island.

The work for this phase began right around the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, so we scrambled to adjust to the new regulations for distancing and masking within the property. The client was unbelievably patient with construction delays caused by the supply chain and labor shortages.

During this phase, we upgraded all of the lighting throughout the space, including a statement dining fixture, pendants over the new island cabinetry, and a sconce above the sink. We also added recessed lighting throughout, which in combination with the



Floor Plan for Construction + Furnishings

now open floor plan, helped to really brighten up the property.

The client already had an amazing art collection when we met, so we re-framed and matted a few and chose to add in a few new statement pieces by local and regional artists. We loved the original piece of textile art she had hung above the fireplace, so added a walnut mantle and furnished the rest of the room with it in mind.



Construction

3D Renderings + Finish Samples





Kitchen + Living + Dining After

With the kitchen walls taken out and ceiling vaulted, it created a unified space between the living and dining rooms.



Living Room After

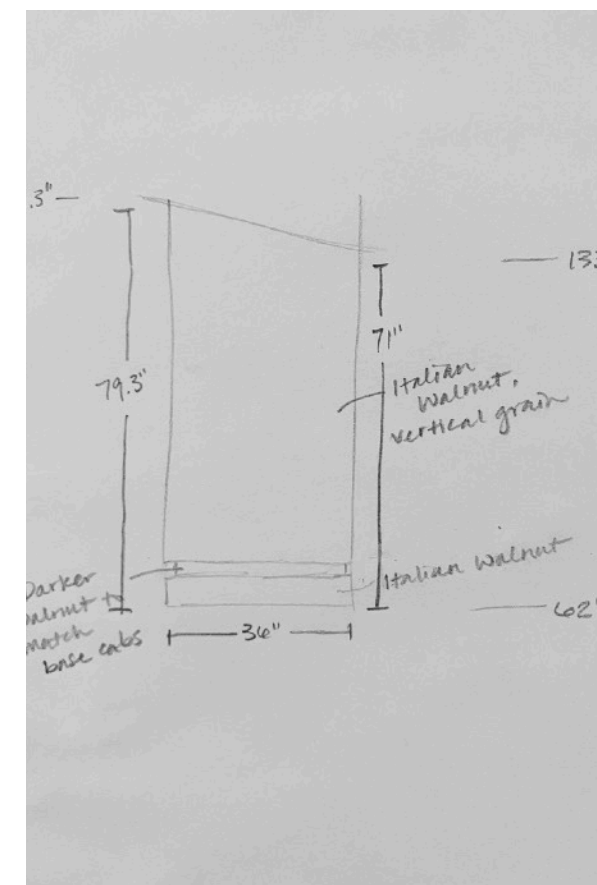


Kitchen + Dining Room After



Custom Range Hood

As we furnished the space, the client had fallen in love with the detail on the sideboard we found to store her mother's china collection. It had a 2" metal inlay across the top with a long grain described by the manufacturer as "Italian Walnut". Taking inspiration from this piece, we decided to design her custom range hood to coordinate, using that strong design element to unify the two spaces.



It turns out that Italian Walnut isn't a real wood species, or if it is, it is not a known product in the western lumber market. So we looked for something that would pull the same long grain patterns as the walnut cabinetry we had selected, but in a lighter blonde tone to anchor the client's strong Scandinavian aesthetic in the room.

We settled on Elm, and worked with our cabinet shop to choose the specific pieces and lay out each face of the hood and the perfect finish to protect it but preserve the natural tones of the woodgrain. We added a walnut veneer inlay to tie in the walnut base cabinets as a unifying accent.





Concealed Storage

With any small kitchen design we have to work hard to maximize storage, and this project was no different.

We added an open bookshelf to the interior side of the kitchen island to store cookbooks and functional items, and captured the backside of both legs of the island to serve as pantry and bar storage.



Space for Entertaining

The finished spaces have a playful, open feel that allow for guests to comfortably sit in either the living room or dining room adjacent while the client works in the kitchen.

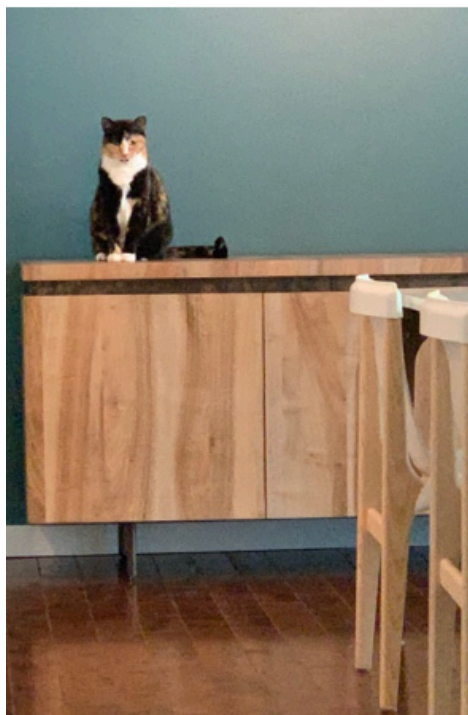
This client loves to cook and has a strong family connection so each piece of furniture and element of the layout were thoughtfully made giving consideration to the height and size of her tall brothers.



Other Obstacles

Charming as they are, this client has two cats – one of whom created quite a challenge for our design team to out-think and over-engineer. To put it simply, “Puck,” the handsome calico, is notorious for ruining everything.

We sourced a top-grain leather sofa to minimize his ability to claw and scratch it. When it came to the final styling of the space, we hung the artwork high enough that he couldn’t easily paw at it or rub up against it walking by. And every item on every shelf or side table had to be attached to the surface using Museum Putty, to minimize the risk of him knocking it to the ground with his paw.



Conclusion

This was a great project with a delightful client. We had so much fun creating this special place and view the finished result as a true reflection of her powerful but playful spirit. The process of purging and remodeling has helped her create and enjoy a lifestyle of comfortably hosting and entertaining, and achieving the more minimalistic lifestyle she was yearning for – and we are so honored to have been part of the transformation.

