

The Thoughtful Bath

A luxurious bathroom's character is borne by innovative technology and recycled materials

BY KRISTIAN KICINSKI

Leslie and Heather were tired of hiking downstairs in the middle of the night to get to the bathroom. Owners of a 100-year-old 1½-story house in Seattle's Capitol Hill district, they had their bedroom in the attic and the bathroom on the first floor. To make matters even more inconvenient, the laundry was farther below in the basement. Leslie and Heather wanted to simplify their lives and their floor plan by putting all three spaces on one level. And because their poorly insulated bedroom needed revamping anyway, it made sense to add a dormer next to the bedroom, gaining space for a bath, a laundry, and a dressing room (floor plan, p. 56). They hired my firm to design a renovation, and general contractors Jan Henderson and Joyce Hurford of Blue Marlin Construction to build it.

And there's a laundry room behind the double doors

Leslie and Heather wanted the new construction to harmonize with the time-honored style of their old house, but they also wanted unmistakably modern features such as a large tub, a curbless shower, and sleek sinks. They also challenged us to make the project environmentally responsible. The resulting design is a mixture of salvaged schoolhouse blackboards, antique light fixtures, and a beadboard ceiling that contrasts with the sleek lines of the plumbing fixtures.

Despite the number of features that are in the bathroom, it feels open and spacious (photo right). Skylights and a row of windows that run above the bathtub fill the room with daylight. The sills, however, are high enough to provide privacy.

We moved the clothes washer and dryer into the bathroom. We didn't want the bath to end up feeling like a utility room, though, so I designed a closet in the bathroom that has shelves located on the doors' interiors (photo left). With the closet doors open, an instant laundry room





TRANSFORMED FROM A DARK ATTIC SPACE. The sunny bathroom addition benefits from lots of light and tasteful materials that include a chalkboard-slate floor, recycled-glass wall tiles, and a beadboard ceiling of sustainably harvested cedar. The wide-open curbless shower features two shower units and a shelf capped with slate. Radiant heat in the walls and floor keeps the enclosure warm on damp winter days.



GREEN BUILDING SHOULDN'T REFER TO THE COLOR OF YOUR MONEY

I often hear (and repeat) the line that you don't have to break the bank to use environmentally responsible materials. It's when someone is trying to pay the absolute lowest price for something that green products start looking expensive. The prices for this project were reasonable—not high end, but not cheap either. The owners purchased all the materials and really helped themselves out by shopping for bargains wherever they could. I think these numbers demonstrate that you can use high-quality, durable materials without depleting ever-scarcer resources, and not pay an arm and a leg.



Materials shine in a second life. Charcoal-gray grout punches up the luminescent green of the recycled glass tiles; a white thinset behind them makes the glass color pop. Towel bars and other bath hardware are recycled aluminum. The sink vanity's medicine-cabinet backplash was made from Pacific madrone harvested from storm-felled city trees; the vanity counter is Richlite, a material made of kraft paper and phenolic resins.

Counters: \$576.69

4 ft. by 8 ft. by ¾ in. (about \$18 per sq. ft.).
Ranier Richlite Co.
www.richlite.com
 888-383-5533

Glass tiles: \$6070.10

Half the tiles were seconds sold at half price.
Bedrock Industries
www.bedrockindustries.com
 877-283-7625

Towel bars: \$103

Recycled aluminum for three towel bars and one toilet-paper holder.
Azcast Design
www.azcast.com
 310-355-0400

Cedar beadboard: \$3.60 per sq. ft.

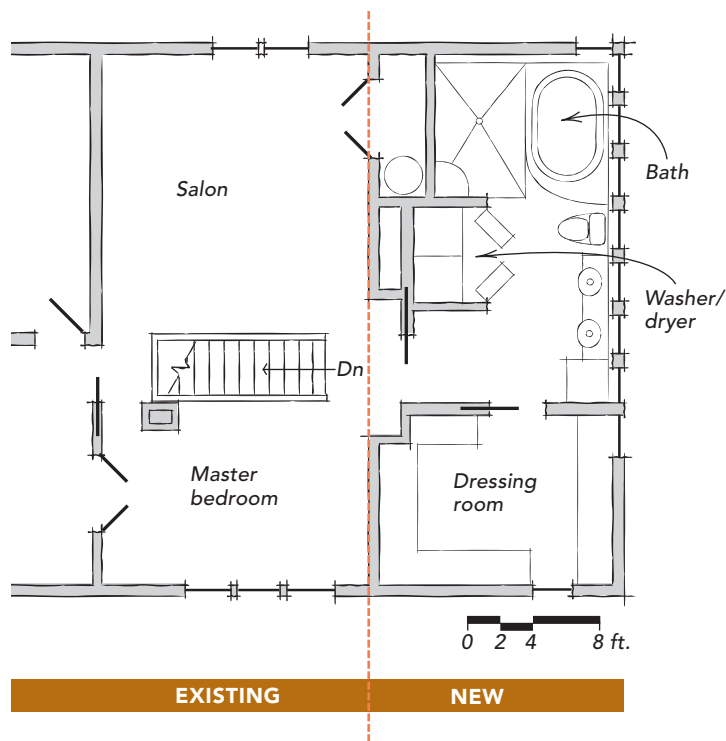
Healthy Forests/Healthy Communities Partnership
www.hfhcp.org
 503-221-6911

Heat saver: \$200

Copper coil rescues heat from hot water in drainpipe and returns it to water heater.
Gravity Film eXchange
www.gfxtechnology.com
 631-758-6271

Wood finish: \$79.95

2.5 liters of OS Hardwax nontoxic finish for cedar ceilings.
Environmental Home Center
www.environmentalhomecenter.com
 800-281-9785



is created. When the doors are closed, the machines are discreetly hidden away.

Bringing green design to the forefront

A big part of my job on this project was to help Leslie and Heather reconcile their dreams of a luxurious bathroom with their goal to be good world citizens. In our practice, we look for products that are socially responsible, contain recycled material, and use sustainably harvested resources (photos left).

All materials, finishes, and adhesives were considered for their effect on indoor-air quality. We used wet-blown cellulose insulation instead of fiberglass, and the clear finish we applied had no toxic fumes. "Using environmentally friendly materials is a good health practice for both the homeowner and the installer," builder Joyce Hurford said later. "For example, the incense-cedar ceilings were finished with OS Hardwax, which means we didn't have to breathe polyurethane or other noxious fumes during application. We learned a lot about the use of nontoxic materials, and we plan to use more of these products in the future."

Conservation is a key part of our designs, too. We try to look for ways to reduce energy bills and save water; on this job, we used a dual-flush toilet ("Feedback," p. 130) and something called a Gravity Film eXchange or GFX, a copper coil that surrounds the drainpipe. As hot water from the shower, washing machine, bathtub, and sinks runs down the drainpipe, the GFX's water-filled coils capture the heat and return it to the water heater. The device's cost starts at \$200 before installation and can recover 60% of the heat usually lost down the drain. □

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