

Urban Farmstead

A little Dutch colonial gets an open plan and lots of year-round living space

BY ERIC ODOR



In 1990, my wife, our two cats, and I relocated from Santa Monica, Calif., to Minneapolis and started house hunting. Cory and I never much liked Dutch colonials, but we found one with maple floors and 10-ft. ceilings, and we made an offer on the spot. When we realized that we could remove virtually every wall on the first floor, we gutted all 1200 sq. ft. in less than a month's time.

After an initial flurry in 1992, we settled into a long, slow process of tackling little projects inside and out as money allowed. When interest rates finally took a dive, we decided to roll the remainder of the work into a refinancing. We hired a local contractor, Mike Knutson, to add an orchid room, a potting shed, a new garage, and a 10-ft. by 33-ft. screened porch.

We owned a small house on a large lot that had been a prime candidate for a teardown, but we had other interests here. As there were only four of us (don't forget the cats), we weren't interested in maximum volume; rather, we were interested in a symphony of spaces, inside and out. We wanted an expansive summer home that would engage the entire site, a cozy winter retreat from which to observe our domain, and a country cabin without the commute. We opted for a village of simple forms.

Stay small, but add lots of variety

It took us a while to see the Dutch colonial for what it really was, but once there, the village idea quietly morphed into an urban farm-



KEEP THE SHAPE, JETTISON THE REST

The original 600-sq.-ft. house (inset) had circuitous circulation at best. The kitchen was tucked behind the stairs, accessible only by passing through the living and dining rooms. The initial renovation cleared the first-floor partition walls and made kitchen access a clean walk from the front door. Upstairs, the homeowners rearranged the bathroom layout and cleaned up the closet space. During the second stage of renovation, the orchid room, the screened porch, and the new garage were added.



Upper floor



Main floor

SPECS

Bedrooms: 2

Bathrooms: 1

Size: 1320 sq. ft., plus 330-sq.-ft. porch

Cost: approximately \$200,000

Completed: 2009

Location: Minneapolis

Architect: Eric Odor, SALA Architects; Jerry Palms of Archistructures, structural engineer

Builder: Knutson Custom Remodelers

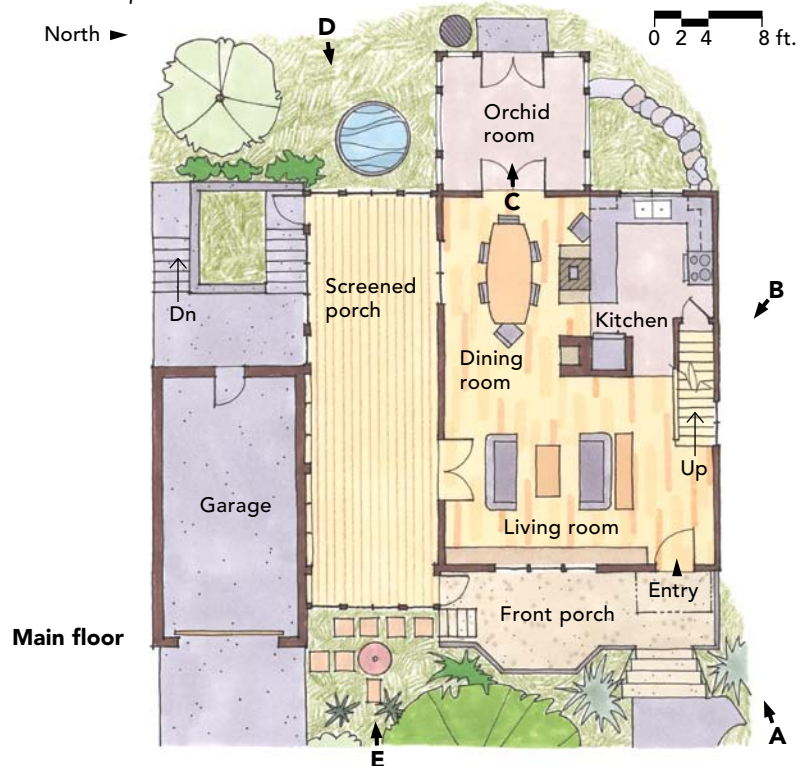


Upper floor

Photos taken at lettered positions.

North ▶

0 2 4 8 ft.



Main floor

Head flashing with an attitude. To get inexpensive weather protection for a side door that leads to the basement, the author designed a galvanized aluminum cowling to echo the gutters and corrugated garage siding. Photo taken at B on floor plan; photo above taken at A.





SMALL ADDITIONS BRING LARGE VALUE

After the interior was remodeled, a new garage and two key elements were added. The enclosed orchid room and screened porch increased the floor plan by only 450 sq. ft.,

but they created a cozy winter sunroom and a breezy summer hangout, respectively. Both overlook the backyard's gardens.

stead. The barnlike house was built in 1905 and was moved to its present location in 1925. Roughly 20 ft. by 30 ft., it hugged the north setback, approximately 30 ft. west of the sidewalk. Over the years, the small garage had sunk about 4 in. at a glacial but persistent rate. We needed a new garage and a screened porch.

The porch was a social necessity. We spent as much time as possible each summer on the uncovered front porch until the mosquitoes drove us to cover. We needed screens, and we needed them front and back.

Cabin without the commute

When the existing garage was stripped from the house, the purity of the barn shape and its clapboard siding made the next move obvious. We needed another form, complete in itself, to define the property's southern boundary. To this end, we built a corrugated-metal granary to house a car and some storage, its simple shed roof reflecting the upper slope of the barn's gambrel roof. These two structures defined a 10-ft. chasm that the screened porch spans from front to back, forming a bridge and breezeway that hovers over the ground. This interstitial perch also became the cabin without the commute.

Gaining space in the plant world

The orchid room was a late addition to the project. After an initial orchid rescue some 10 years ago, our plant population seemed to take off and now needed a home of its own. As fate would have it, the foundation of that home became the basement walkout that we always needed as well as the potting shed of Cory's dreams.

Staying close to the agricultural roots of the project, we borrowed frugal, sustainable methods and materials common to farm life, using recycled and recyclable elements such as high-fly-ash concrete, corrugated steel and fiber-cement siding, and harvested rainwater. With water being a precious resource soon to be scarce, we spent a great deal of time and effort figuring out how to manage it. We ended up using a variety of tools, including rain chains, rain barrels, rain gardens, and a 6-ft.-dia. livestock tank as our reservoir. □

Eric Odor is a principal with the firm SALA Architects in Minneapolis. Photos by Troy Theis, except where noted.



Winter's retreat. A surplus of orchids and the need for a sunroom drove the addition of the orchid room. Its foundation serves as a potting shed accessible from the backyard (photo right). Photo taken at C on floor plan.



PROJECT COSTS

Although the entire project stretched out over 15 years, most of the cost came when we added the garage, orchid room, and screened porch. Because my wife and I renovated the main house ourselves, the estimated cost is a little harder to separate into labor and materials.

Our work inside the existing house:
approximately
\$50,000



Summer getaway really close to home. Built as a bug-free breezeway, the porch hangs suspended between the house and the garage. Photos taken at D and E on floor plan.

Contractor's work:

- Re-side existing house with fiber-cement clapboards and 5/4 clear-cedar trim: **\$17,000**

- New concrete-block chimney and three-tab asphalt roofing on existing house: **\$10,000**

- New 11-ft. by 12-ft. orchid-room and potting-shed foundation: **\$40,000**

- New 12-ft. by 22-ft. garage and 10-ft. by 33-ft. screened porch: **\$103,000**
- Total: \$170,000**

