

Attic remodeling makes room for another growing family

BY DAVE PAGE

Contractor Peter Hagen is familiar with the new-baby shuffle: A couple who have a child or two already discover that another one is on the way and start thinking about a larger home. They want to remain in the neighborhood and begin looking for a house on the market that meets their needs. After a few weeks, they give up and hire an architect to see what can be done with their present home. At that point, Hagen gets the call and is told he has seven months to turn the architect's plans into reality.

"Sometimes the schedule can be a challenge," said Hagen, who along with partner Mel Salmi operates Transformed Tree Remodelers and Cabinetmakers. "But it's a great feeling when we finish on time."

Among Hagen's recent customers who fit that pattern were Kevin and Angela Gilligan. In 1999 they purchased a turn-of-the-last-century Queen Anne home in Merriam Park that at one time had been converted to a duplex and was then in the process of being turned back into a single-family home.

The previous owners "had done all the structural work (for the conversion), and they did a great job," Angela said. So the Gilligans just picked up where the previous owners had left off, installing a master bath on the second floor, refinishing the floors and painting the walls.

"The house was perfect when we had two



The master bedroom in the remodeled attic of the Gilligans' Merriam Park home.

children," Angela said. However, when she found out in the summer of 2006 that she was pregnant with a third child, she and Kevin decided they wanted four bedrooms.

They searched for a larger home in or near Merriam Park, but couldn't find one they liked. One of Kevin's sisters recommended having architect Guy Williams stop by to see what could be done with their home. Williams drew up a preliminary plan to turn the unfinished attic into a master bedroom suite, and then hooked the Gilligans up with Transformed Tree. Hagen and Salmi became a part of the design team in the fall of 2006 and began construction that year.

For Hagen and his carpenters, several challenges immediately presented themselves. The first was to fit everything the Gilligans wanted into the existing attic space. "They didn't want to expand the house's size or add dormers," Hagen said. That required some clever design

work. For example, a hinged door in the master bedroom folds down to give the Gilligans access to a dormer that is now being used as a walk-in closet.

Another challenge involved the stairway to the third floor. It needed to be redesigned to meet the code requirements for risers and treads. The solution involved removing a back stairway to the second floor. "That actually worked out pretty well," Hagen said. "We were able to reconfigure the stairs to the attic as well as create a mud room at the back entrance to the house."

However, the biggest challenge involved the new heating and cooling system. The home was originally heated with hot water. Air conditioning was added later, but just to the second floor. The house now integrates heating and cooling in a single forced-air system with several zones. "We didn't have much space to work with," Hagen said, "so it required a lot

of coordination between the heating contractor and the carpenters to get in all the duct work."

One reason the Gilligans hired Transformed Tree was the company's in-house cabinetry shop. Hagen and Salmi know how to take advantage of every possible space for extra storage, and they did so by means of shelves and cabinets that were custom-built with quarter-sawn white oak.

Transformed Tree completed the project in March 2007, just before Angela gave birth. The Gilligans' third floor now contains a master bedroom, a small office, a family room and a master bath with a double sink, glass-enclosed shower, heated slate floor and glass pocket door. New Marvin windows and Velux skylights were installed in all four rooms, providing abundant light to what could otherwise have been a lot of dark corners.

Transformed Tree also installed a gas fireplace with a custom surround in the first-floor parlor, something the Gilligans had wanted since buying the house.

Angela said she is "really happy," not only with the finished space, but with how well the job went during five months of construction. Helping in that regard was the exterior stairway that Hagen and his carpenters built to the third floor so they could haul material up without disturbing the family.

"We always saw the potential in the house," Angela said. "Now it has everything we want."



Three views of the Gilligans' newly remodeled attic: (from left) family room, master bath with double sink and shower, and the hinged doorway to the walk-in closet off the master bedroom.

