



Nari - 2025 Roty Awards

Category: Residential Historical Renovation/Restoration \$250,000 and Over

Project:

Reviving Grandeur: Historic Renovation

Introduction

In this 1931 historic home, designed by Carl Gage with a blend of New York Brownstone and French Chateau influences, the cramped and disjointed kitchen was unworthy of its architectural pedigree.

Our design completely reimaged the space into an open-concept plan that balances modern living with meticulous historic preservation.

We thoughtfully integrated original architectural elements with a curated mix of new and vintage fixtures.

A stunning, full-height Italian Carrara marble backsplash pays homage to the home's European roots, while seamlessly integrated appliances and enlarged windows provide contemporary function and abundant natural light.

The result is a sophisticated, timeless kitchen that is finally authentic to the home's grandeur.



Client Problems & Design Objectives

- The workflow of the existing kitchen was so congested and dysfunctional that the clients, both avid cooks, had abandoned cooking in the space almost entirely.
- The layout was severely outdated, suffering from a critical lack of functional storage, poor circulation, and inadequate appliance placement.
- As a small, isolated 1931 "servant's kitchen," the space was aesthetically disconnected from the home's grand architecture and felt isolated from all living areas.
- The primary objective was to transform this utility space into the true "heart of the home," creating an open-concept layout with dedicated ergonomic zones for two cooks and seamless flow for entertaining.
- The new design had to meticulously integrate with the home's unique historical character, finally giving the residence the kitchen it deserved.

Project Constraints

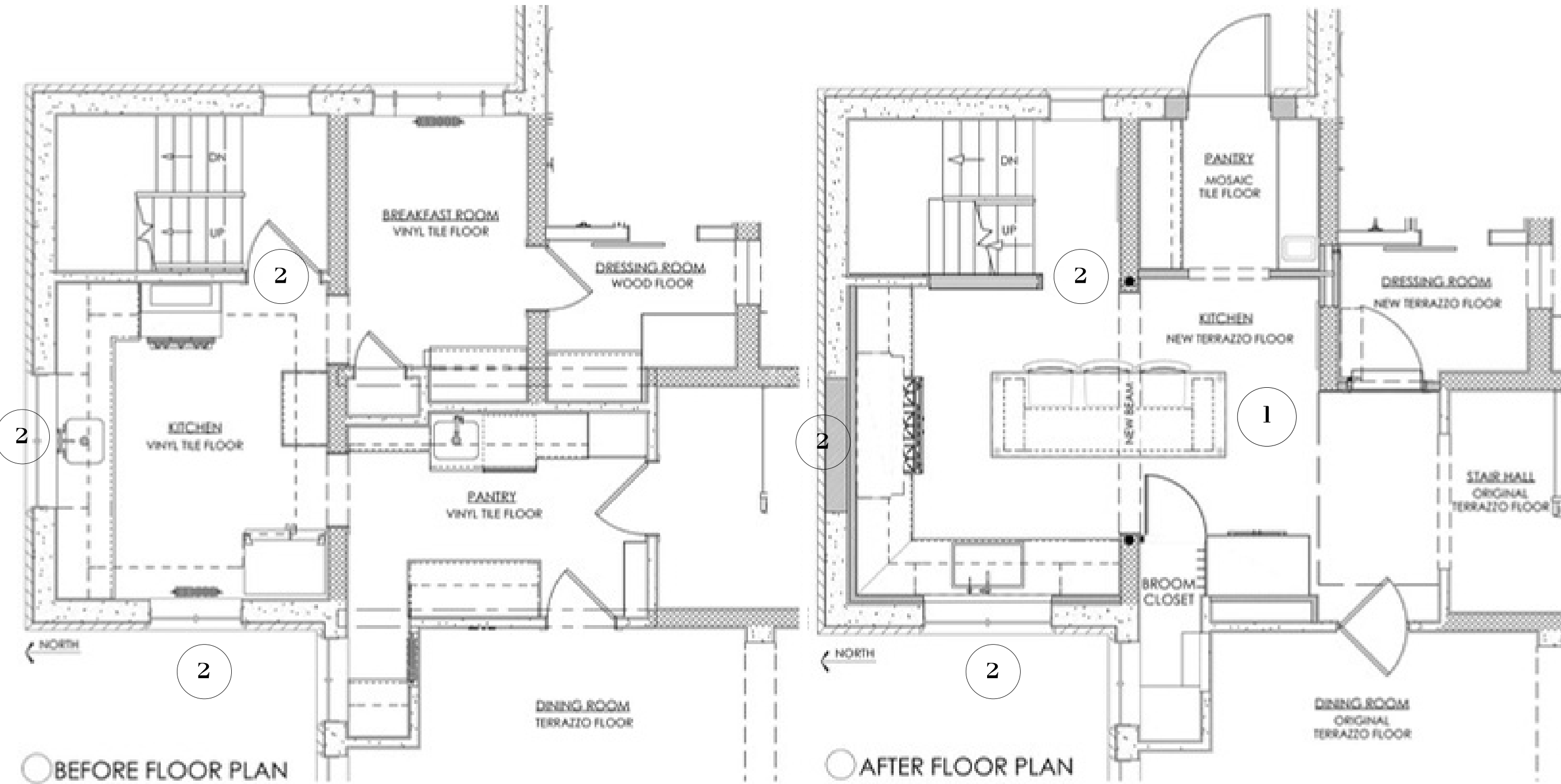
- The home's unique 1931 construction of solid concrete, clay tile, and plaster meant that all interior partitions were masonry, presenting significant structural, plumbing, and electrical challenges.
- All wall removals required extensive pre-planning with structural engineers and contingency plans for unforeseen structural conditions discovered during demolition.
- The home's original material palette was entirely masonry-based. This created a unique design challenge for introducing wood cabinetry in a way that felt historically appropriate and authentic.

Floor Plan Transformation

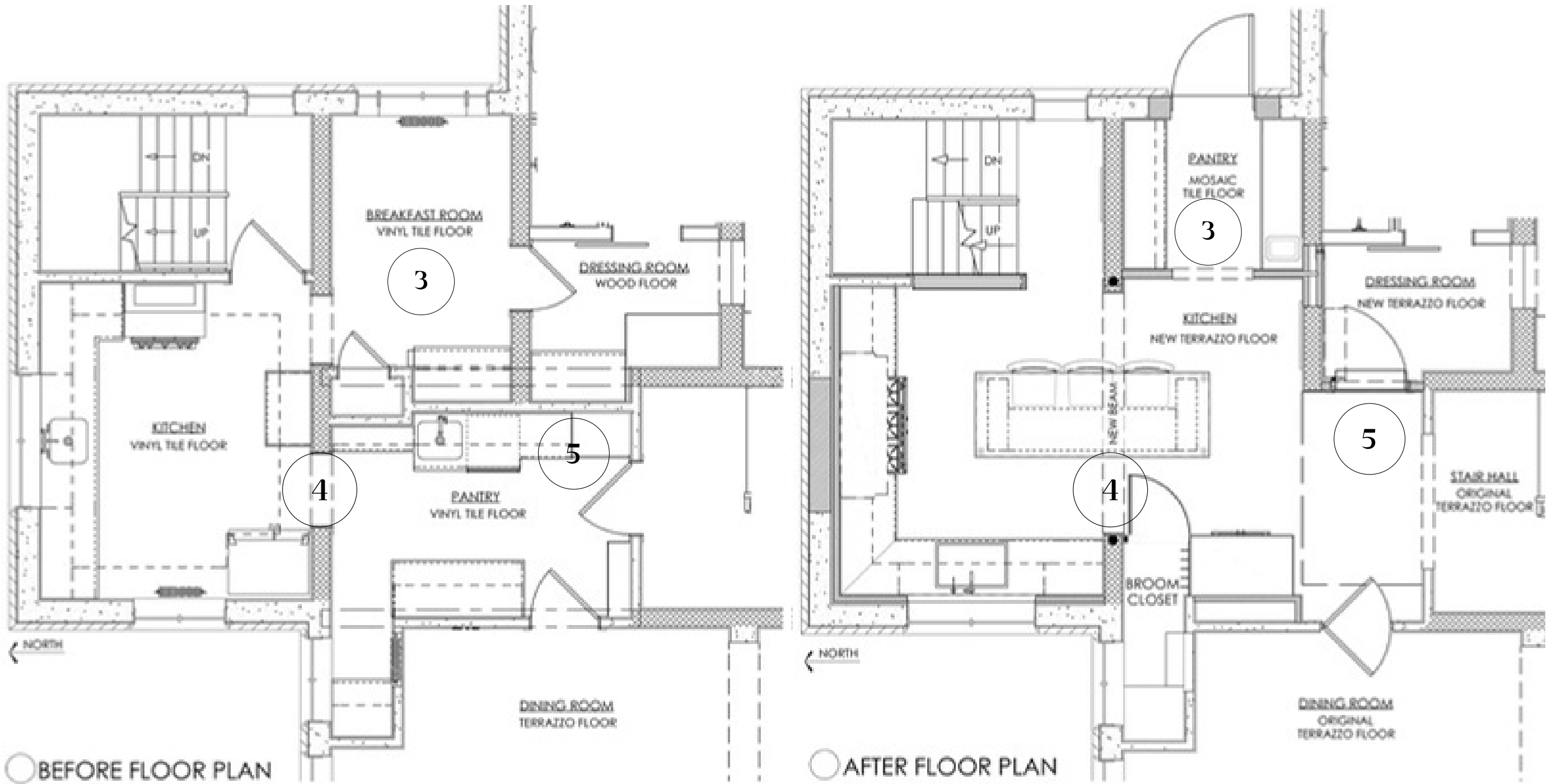
Design Solutions

1) Reimagined Circulation & Central Hub: The formerly congested layout with multiple doorways was rationalized to create a seamless, intuitive traffic flow. A large central island now anchors the new open plan, establishing a multipurpose hub for modern prep, seating, and entertaining that was absent in the original design.

2) Strategic Light & View Optimization: To create a stunning focal wall for the new range, a window was removed. This was balanced by widening a key nearby window and removing the wall between kitchen and back stairway, which floods the once-dark space with natural light and enhances the connection to the outdoors.



Floor Plan Transformation



Design Solutions

3) Enhanced Indoor-Outdoor

Functionality: A new walk-in pantry was added, serving as a vital transitional space. It offers extensive storage and provides crucial direct access to the deck for grilling and entertaining, while also simplifying daily routines like letting the dogs out.

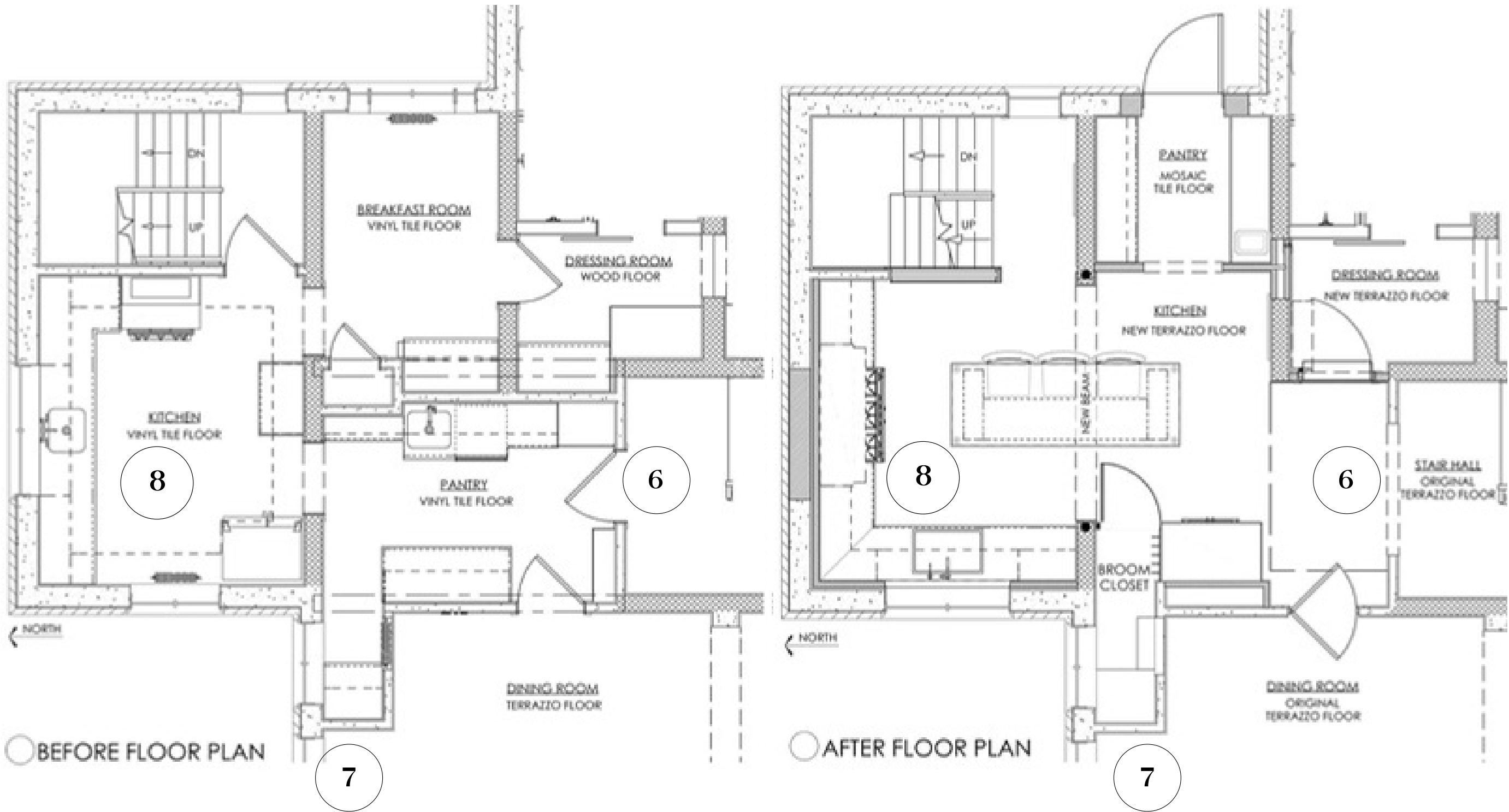
4) Intentional Structural Expression:

The necessary structural beam created an unavoidable lower transition. This was transformed into a deliberate architectural feature, detailed with custom millwork and a paint finish that echoes the living room's design, unifying the two spaces.

5) Discreet Primary Suite Access:

A custom designed "hidden" bookcase door was seamlessly integrated into the millwork. This clever solution provides private access to the primary suite, allowing the homeowners to close off their personal quarters during gatherings without disrupting the kitchen's historical aesthetic.

Floor Plan Transformation



Design Solutions

6) Creation of a Central Sightline: The opening between the main staircase and kitchen was significantly widened. This established a direct visual axis through the home's core, connecting the kitchen and living room for the first time. This transformation fulfilled a key homeowner desire, dramatically improving the sense of openness and flow.

7) Adaptive Reuse for Functional Storage: An awkward, narrow hallway was strategically repurposed into a highly functional utility closet. A full-light glass door was used to preserve the passage of natural light while providing essential, concealed storage for brooms, vacuums, and other necessities.

8) Ergonomic Workflow for Two Cooks: The previous kitchen's congested layout was a major pain point that had discouraged the homeowners from cooking. The new design implements modern ergonomic principles with dedicated zones for prep, cooking, and cleaning, creating an efficient workflow that allows two cooks to work simultaneously without obstruction.



Existing Living Room



Window Detail



Beam and Column Detail

Key Architectural Elements: Simplicity & Cohesiveness

Our design approach was guided by the home's understated and clean-lined architectural language.

- We honored this simplicity by replicating the original plaster return on new openings and matching trim profile where needed, creating a seamless transition into the kitchen.
- A key decision was made to not extend the living room's unique plaster dental moulding, preserving its formal character. Instead, continuity was achieved by echoing a distinctive two-tone detail from a structural beam.
- This commitment to authenticity extended to the flooring; a new, custom-matched terrazzo floor was poured to honor the original found throughout the main level. This decision was beautifully affirmed during demolition with the discovery of original terrazzo hidden beneath old flooring, confirming our design was a true restoration.
- The home's material palette was further integrated by introducing black iron fixtures, a nod to its use on the exterior, and by selecting new lighting that is in dialogue with the home's original sconces.

Reviving Grandeur: Historic Renovation



Original Railing



New Railing



New Railing

Key Architectural Element: Iron Railing

To ensure architectural continuity, the new kitchen railing was designed to be in direct dialogue with the home's original main stair railing.

Although the kitchen stair is secondary, its visual proximity demanded a thoughtful solution. Rather than an exact replication, a custom railing was fabricated featuring a scaled-down interpretation of the primary railing's motif.

This intentional choice honors the original ironwork as the dominant feature while creating a cohesive visual thread that subtly unifies the historic and renovated spaces.



Existing Library



Kitchen



Pantry

Key Architectural Elements: Wood Tone & Style

In a home constructed almost entirely of concrete, clay tile, and plaster, the only original wood was found in the library.

This rich, historic woodwork became the direct inspiration for the new kitchen's custom cabinetry.

Both the warm wood tone and the specific cabinet profiles were meticulously replicated, creating a powerful and authentic link between the library and the new heart of the home.

This choice introduces a historically appropriate warmth that now feels cohesive throughout the main level.

Construction Constraints



Photo showing two existing beam and the new beam that location and constraints



Photo showing the clay tile construction



Photo showing the concrete floor, concrete block and demolition of stairway wall

Before



A narrow secondary kitchen closed off the main kitchen, limiting flow and light from the rest of the home

After



The doorway was enlarged into a wide cased opening, detailed to match the home's simple architecture. The new connection significantly improves traffic flow and creates a brighter, more spacious kitchen

Before



Two small, awkward rooms off the kitchen created cramped work zones and wasted space. The main kitchen was in the back of the home far from the living and dining room with no connection to the home

After



To better suit a modern lifestyle centered on entertaining, a key wall was removed. This single design move unified the kitchen with the main living areas, creating a spacious, open-concept environment with vastly improved function and flow.

Before



The original kitchen was defined by a cramped, disjointed layout that suffered from inefficient circulation and function. The placement of the windows prevented the creation of a proper focal point, resulting in a space that was functionally compromised and lacked architectural presence.

After



By strategically removing the window, the floor plan was reconfigured to create an open layout with a commanding focal wall. Centered on a custom hood and a full-height Italian marble backsplash this feature anchors the room with a clear sense of purpose.

Before



The kitchen's functionality was severely compromised by an undersized window placed below the counter line, which fractured the primary work surface and created a disjointed workflow. Aesthetically, the space was disconnected from the rest of the home, lacking the architectural character and charm of the surrounding rooms.

After



The window was raised and significantly enlarged, creating a seamless countertop run and positioning the new sink to capture abundant natural light and exterior views. A stunning centerpiece island, featuring bespoke unlacquered brass details, now anchors the space. Together with vintage-inspired crystal fixtures, these elements restore the kitchen's architectural integrity, elevating the room with a new level of timeless sophistication.

Before



A full-height wall enclosing the adjacent staircase created a hard visual barrier that severely constricted the kitchen, making the space feel cramped, dark, and disconnected from the home's natural flow.

After



Opening the kitchen to the staircase created a dramatic sense of volume and established a new design canvas. This newly exposed wall is now adorned with a striking wallcovering that introduces a layer of sophisticated whimsy and character. The adjacent island, which features custom glass-front display shelving and elegant unlacquered brass hardware, creating a rich, layered design.

Before



The back staircase was isolated from the main living areas by a restrictive cased opening and a solid enclosing wall. This configuration made the stairway feel cramped and dark, effectively separating it from the home's primary circulation and flow.

After



By removing the enclosing wall and replacing it with a custom iron railing that echoes the home's primary railing, the staircase is now seamlessly integrated with the main floor. This change dramatically improves sightlines and the flow of natural light, transforming a once-cramped and isolated passage into a graceful architectural feature of the home.

Before



After



The Pantry

BEFORE

Adjacent to the kitchen, a pass-through room leading to the primary suite was an undefined space with no clear function, representing significant wasted potential in the home's floor plan.

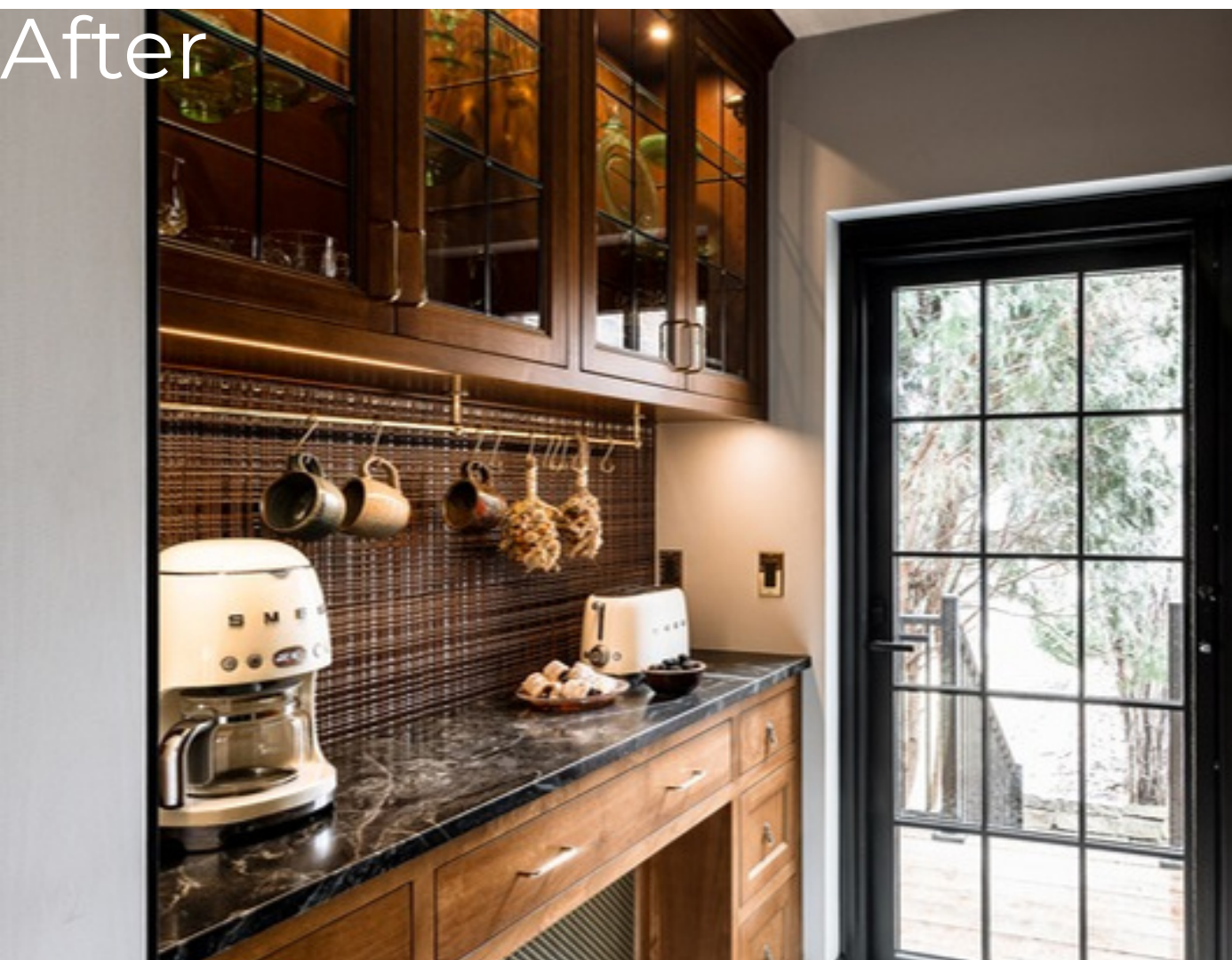
AFTER

The space was completely reimaged into a hardworking, multifunctional butler's pantry. One wall provides floor-to-ceiling cabinetry for dry goods, while the opposing side serves as an elegant breakfast and serving bar with soapstone countertops and a custom leaded glass cabinet.

A new door with historically-matched grids offers direct backyard access for grilling and daily routines.

The room's authentic character is cemented by a marble mosaic floor and a curated mix of hardware, pairing vintage pieces from a local architectural antique store with new unlacquered brass designed to patina beautifully over time.

After



The Details

The project's character is defined by an intentional layering of bespoke details, each curated to add richness without overwhelming the space.

This is seen in the pairing of the unique Italian marble backsplash with a marble mosaic floor, and the deliberate repetition of unlacquered brass—from the pot filler to custom details on the island.

This blend of ornate and simple is perfectly encapsulated by the custom-designed range hood; its subtle curves provide a sophisticated counterpoint to the clean lines of the simple, library-inspired cabinetry.

This thoughtful balance of elaborate detail and elegant restraint is what elevates the space, making it feel both luxurious and timeless



More than a Door

An underutilized hallway niche was thoughtfully repurposed into a full-height utility closet.

Rather than blocking an existing window, a custom door featuring a leaded glass panel was designed, with a pattern reminiscent of other architectural motifs found in the home.

This elegant solution provides essential, concealed storage for cookbooks and utility items, while simultaneously preserving natural light and creating a beautiful visual break in the long cabinetry run.



Hidden Details

Thoughtful, hidden details are a hallmark of this project, honoring the home's historic character while providing modern functionality.

This is exemplified by a pet gate that seamlessly retracts into the wall, addressing the clients' daily needs without any visual intrusion.

The most significant detail is the hidden bookcase door, which elegantly solves for primary suite access directly off the kitchen.

For daily life, the passage remains open for easy circulation, but when entertaining, the door closes to become a beautiful bookcase and display piece, completely concealing the private quarters while enhancing the room's architectural charm.





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