

NARI MINNESOTA - 2026 RotY AWARDS

PROJECT: VÄRD

CATEGORY: BASEMENT OVER \$250,000



Client Objectives

setting the tone for family

The homeowners wanted to transform their dated 1990s lower level into a warm, functional space, one designed not just for entertaining and everyday use, but to set the tone for the rest of the home. With a family of six children, most of whom are grown and frequently visiting with their own families and friends, the need for a space that could flex between lively gatherings and comfortable extended stays was central to the project. Beyond function, they were looking to replace a heavy, dated aesthetic that had defined the space for the past 30+ years with something that finally felt like them.

Their objectives included:

- Transform dark, compartmentalized lower level into a warm, open, connected space
- Create a fully functioning secondary kitchen suited for extended guest stays
- A updated private guest suite designed with comfort and privacy in mind
- Update overall aesthetic, one that would set the tone for future updates throughout the home
- Introduce cohesive materials and design elements to unify all areas
- Versatile space flexible enough for gatherings, overnight guests, & everyday life



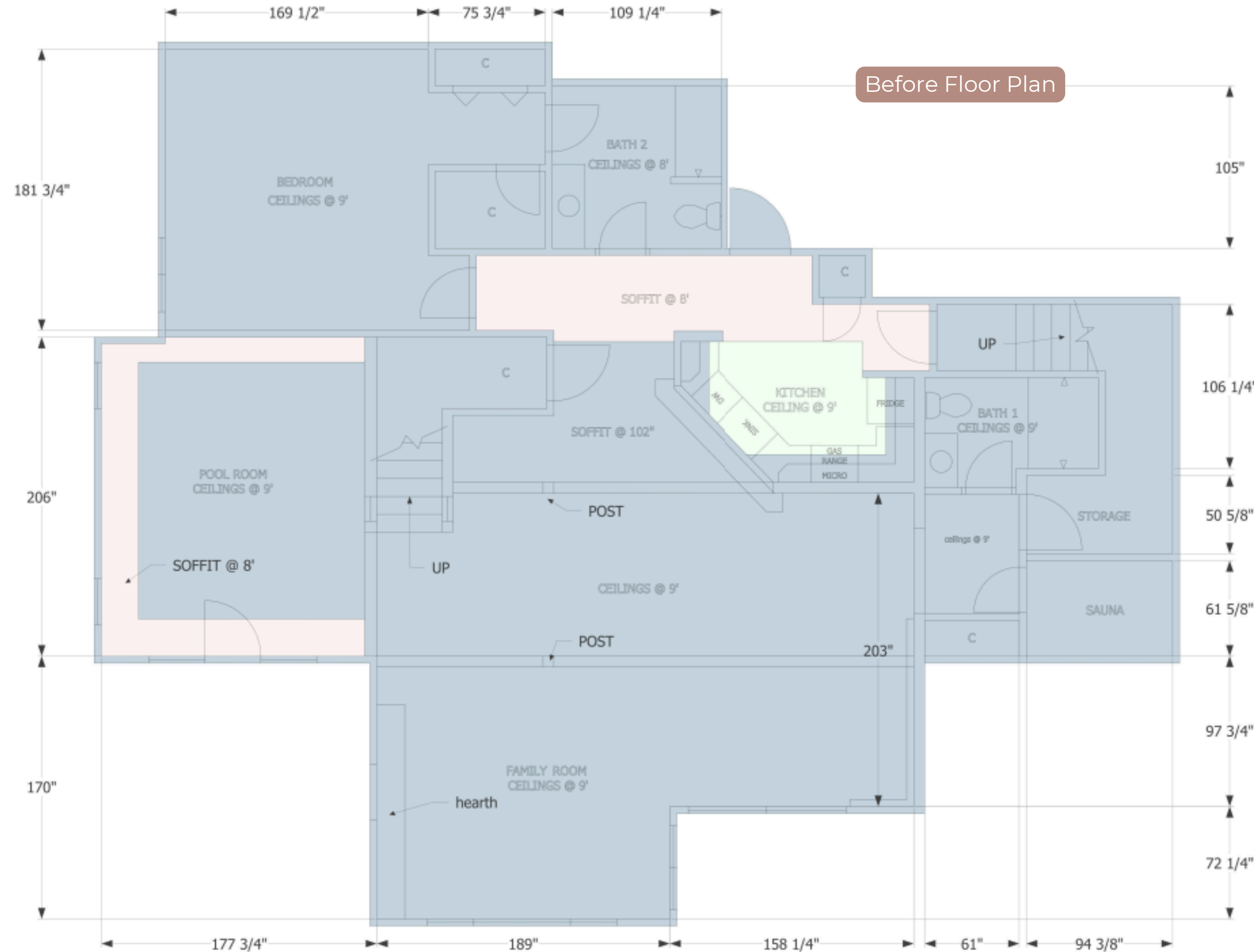
Client Frustrations

before floor plan

When the homeowners purchased the home, the lower level reflected an aesthetic that was never theirs. The space was dark, heavy, and compartmentalized in a way that made the entire level feel smaller and more closed off than it actually was.

What wasn't working:

- Dark woods and cherry cabinetry throughout made the space feel dated and heavy
- Choppy room layout created poor flow and disconnected spaces
- An oversized stone fireplace wall dominated the main room, limiting its potential as a gathering area
- Structural posts interrupted sightlines and landed directly within key living spaces
- The kitchenette was too cramped and limited for everyday use or entertaining
- Tight, awkward hallways made circulation feel disconnected throughout



Client Requests

after floor plan

The homeowners came to the project with a clear sense of what they needed, both in terms of how the space would function and how it would feel.

An updated guest suite to welcome visiting family and friends and ensure their comfort.

A reimagined game room area..

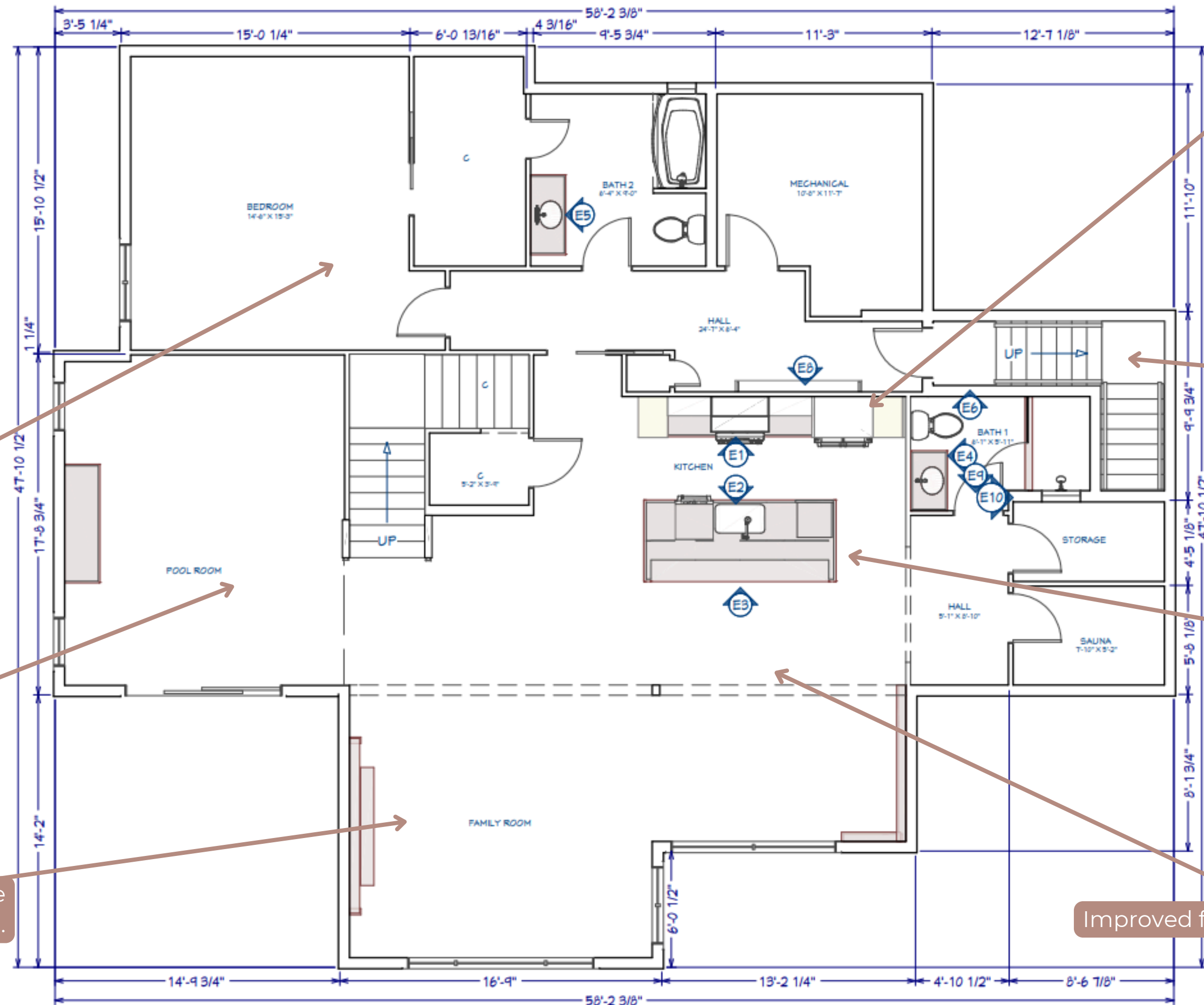
A contemporary fireplace to replace the outdated stone wall and oversized hearth.

A true secondary kitchen with a full range, refrigerator, dishwasher, and microwave for long stay guests.

An update to the private entrance for guests staying in their home.

An oversized island with plenting of seating for family gatherings

Improved flow and sight lines.



Challenges Addressed

removing the obstacles

Every lower level remodel comes with its share of structural and design constraints. This one had several.



Structural Posts in Middle of Everything

Existing support posts interrupted sightlines and landed directly within gathering spaces. A post was relocated with a new footing, and a new steel beam with additional footings was added along the one side, opening the floor plan without compromising structural integrity.

Full Mechanical Reconfiguration

The project required relocating return air pathways, rerouting plumbing lines, modifying shower drains, and running new electrical throughout — all coordinated simultaneously across HVAC, plumbing, and electrical trades within a finished below-grade space.

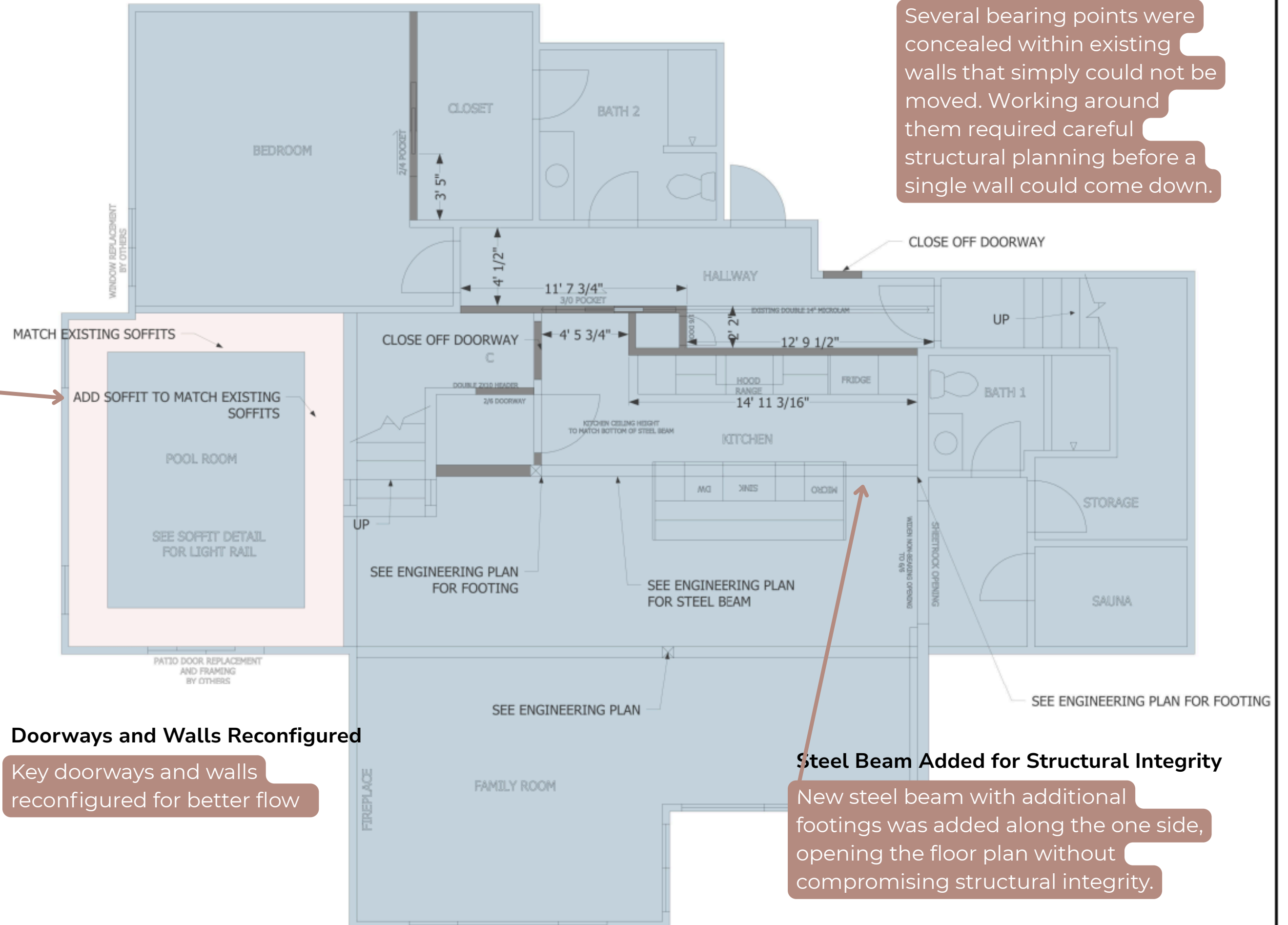


Challenges Addressed

strategic changes

Ceiling and Soffit Work Throughout

With trades moving in every direction, ceilings required repair and refinishing across the entire lower level. New soffits were framed to conceal updated mechanicals while maintaining clean sightlines throughout.



Hidden Bearing Points

Several bearing points were concealed within existing walls that simply could not be moved. Working around them required careful structural planning before a single wall could come down.

Doorways and Walls Reconfigured

Key doorways and walls reconfigured for better flow

Steel Beam Added for Structural Integrity

New steel beam with additional footings was added along the one side, opening the floor plan without compromising structural integrity.

Functionality

built for real life

The completed lower level functions as a true extension of the home, versatile enough for entertaining, hosting guests, and everyday family life all at once.



Before



After

Functionality

all about ease

FUNCTION

Fully equipped with a range, microwave, refrigerator, and dishwasher, the secondary kitchen allows guests to stay for extended visits without relying on the main level.

FUNCTION

Reconfigured walls, relocated doors, and an enlarged bedroom closet eliminated the tight, disconnected hallway behind the kitchen

FUNCTION

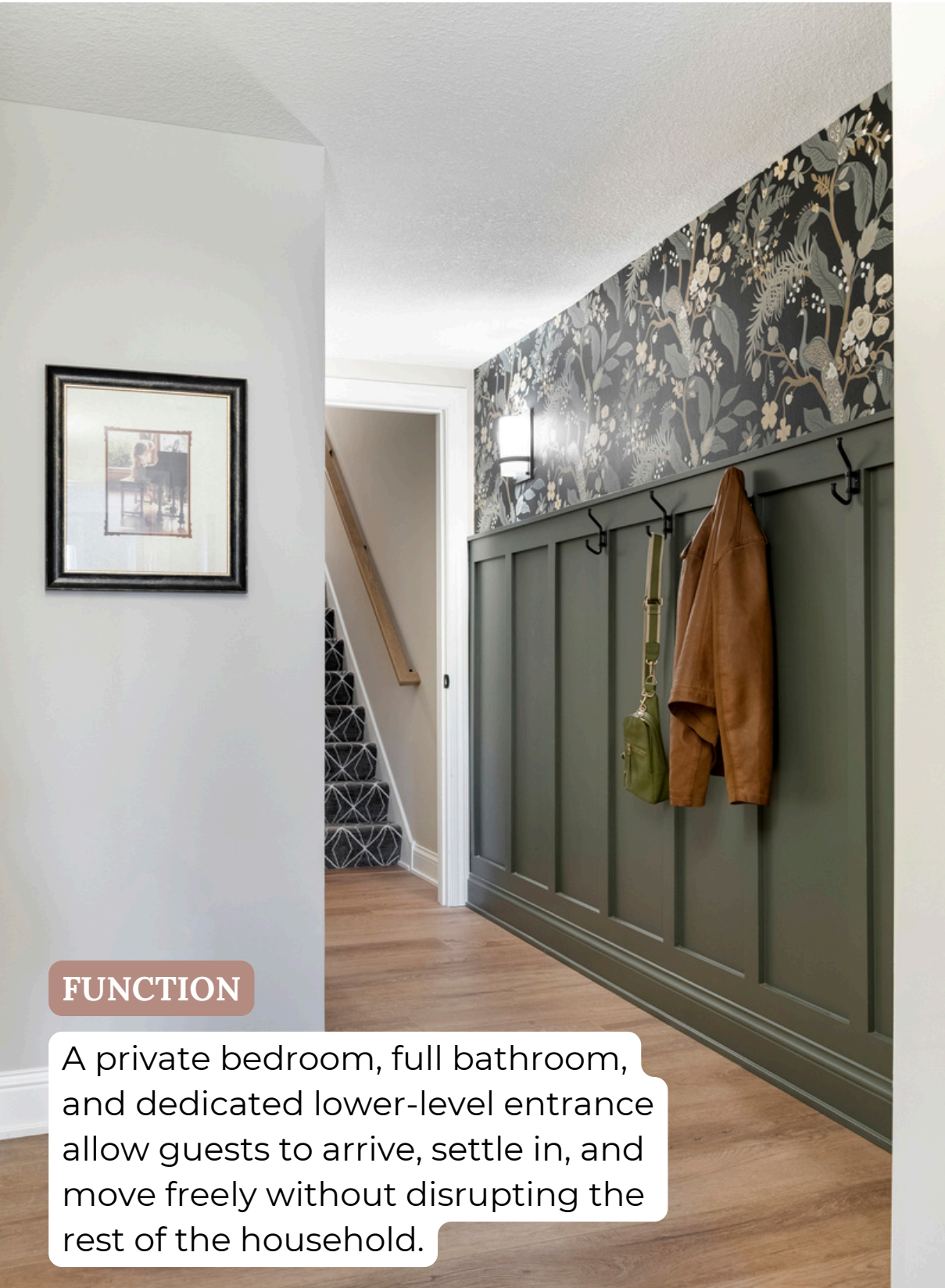
The oversized island with seating doubles as a casual dining and gathering space.

Functionality

a private retreat for guests

FUNCTION

A refreshed powder bath serves the main lower level living areas giving others a convenient option without needing to access the guest suite..



FUNCTION

A private bedroom, full bathroom, and dedicated lower-level entrance allow guests to arrive, settle in, and move freely without disrupting the rest of the household.



Before



Guest Bath



Powder



Before



Craftsmanship & Innovation

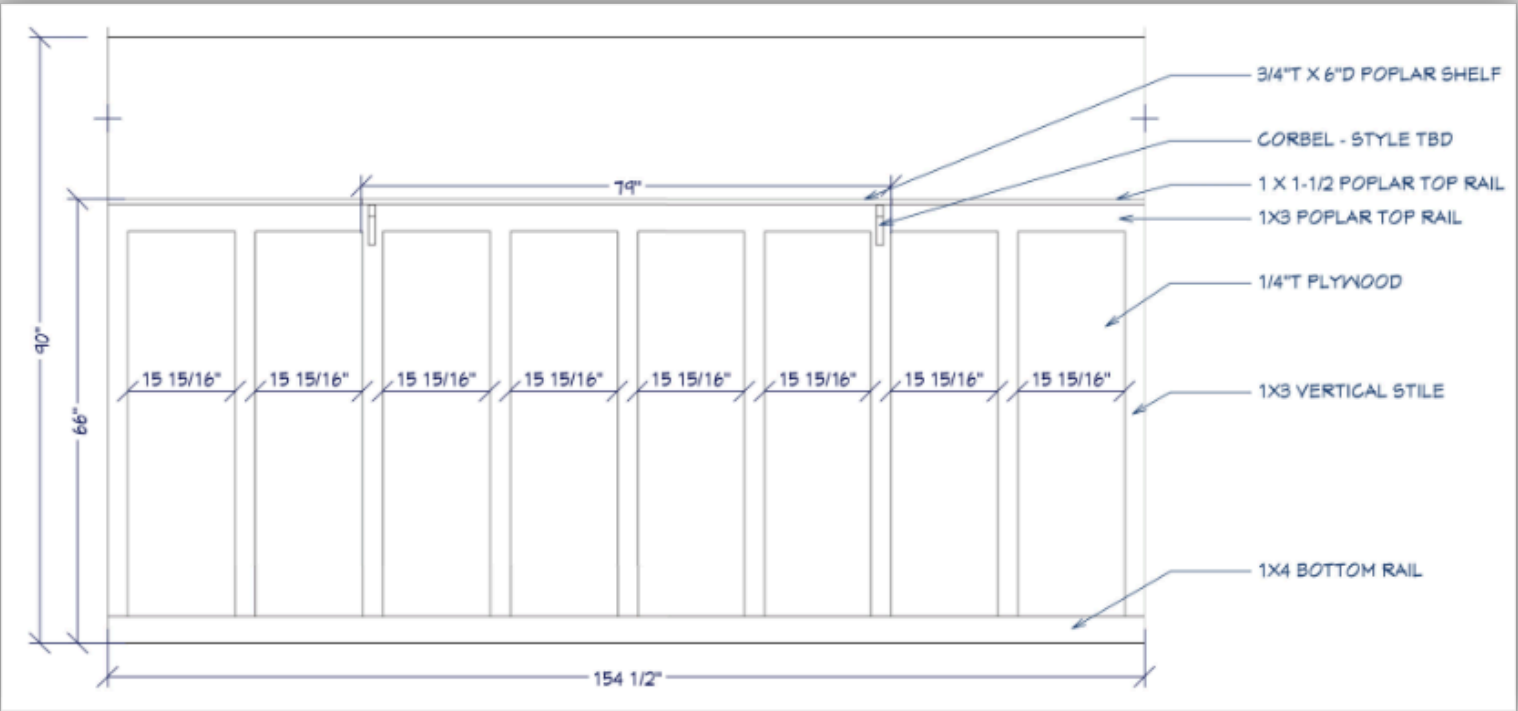
detail and care

The quality of this project is visible in its finish work but it's also rooted in the technical precision required at every stage, from structural execution to the details that define each space.

INNOVATION

Structural Constraints Turned Into Design Moments

Rather than simply hiding the mechanical and structural realities of a lower level remodel, soffits were shaped and positioned to become defining architectural features, most notably in the game room, where the overhead detail anchors the entire space.



CRAFTSMANSHIP

Custom oak beams, millwork and meticulously planned wainscoting and built-in cabinetry reflect the level of craftsmanship applied at every stage.

Aesthetics

elegant, warm & welcoming

Every material and finish selection in this lower level was made with the same intent, to feel warm and inviting without sacrificing a contemporary edge.



AESTHETICS

Custom oak beams are an intentional detail, adding warmth and visual interest

AESTHETICS

Matte black hardware matches lighting and accents for elsewhere.

AESTHETICS

Maple cabinetry finished in Spanish Oak and SW Urbane Bronze balances warmth and contrast.

AESTHETICS

The waterfall countertop mimics the clean lines found throughout the lower level.

AESTHETICS

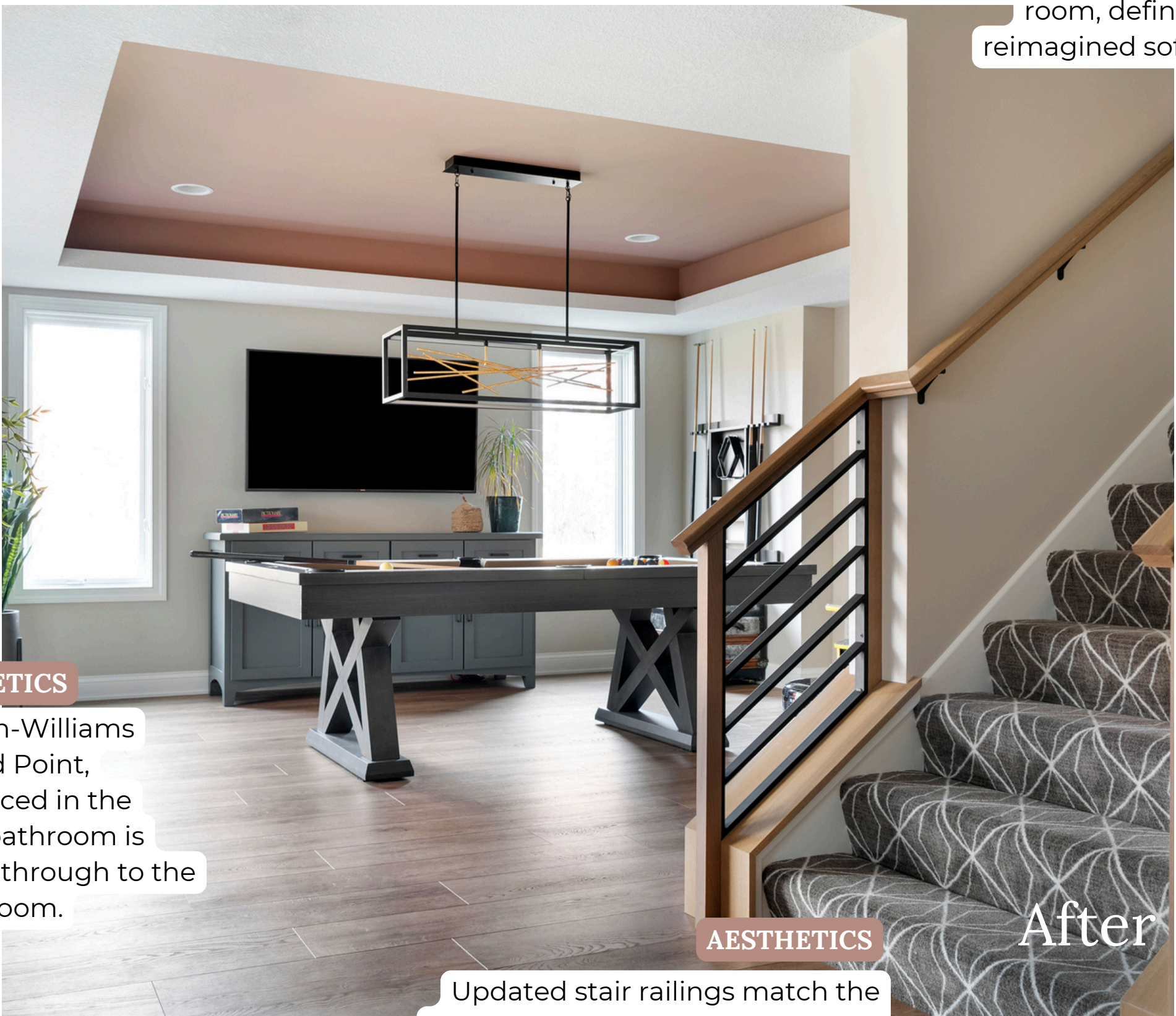
Updated flooring including LVP in the main living areas and carpet in the guest suite.

Aesthetics

warm and cohesive with just a touch of drama



AESTHETICS
Sherwin-Williams Redend Point, introduced in the guest bathroom is carried through to the game room.



AESTHETICS

Updated stair railings match the contemporary design throughout.

AESTHETICS
The former living space is now the game room, defined overhead by a custom reimagined soffit and dramatic lighting.



After Before

Aesthetics

anchoring the room

An oversized stone fireplace and hearth that dominated the space previously was removed entirely and replaced with a clean, contemporary fireplace design that still anchors the room, just without the visual weight. Now an area for family and friends to gather, intentional choices, including the wood beams and soft colors, make the space feel cozy and welcoming.



Before



AESTHETICS

Layered lighting everywhere including recessed, scone, undercabinet, toe-kick, and pendants amplifies the natural light that is now felt thanks to a lighter overall aesthetic.