

2026 NARI RotY Awards

Minnesota

CATEGORY: Entire House Over \$1,000,000
PROJECT: Luck Retreat



PROJECT SUMMARY

This century-old lake cabin, with a 1980s addition, was thoughtfully reimagined to preserve its sentimental character while embracing the family's lifestyle today. The extensive remodel introduced a centered, more accessible entry, all-new windows, siding and stone, plus a new screen porch and decks that enhance lake views. Inside, a relocated kitchen creates an effortless connection to gathering spaces, while two ensuite bedrooms open to private patios. Original open rafters and a signature wall of family inscriptions were carefully preserved. White oak, stone and refined finishes complement the cabin's character, creating a timeless retreat that honors its past while welcoming its next chapter.



WHY THE CLIENT REMODELED

- **No longer reflected the way the family lives**
 - While the property had sentimental value and a special connection to the lake, the existing cabin was dated, compartmentalized, and lacked the functionality and design sensibility needed for how the family gathered today. Rather than leave behind a place with so much meaning, they chose to thoughtfully reimagine it.
- **Disconnected floor plan & undersized kitchen**
 - The home's layered history had created a fragmented floor plan, with the original 100-year-old structure and 1985 addition functioning as disconnected spaces. An undersized kitchen was isolated from the main living areas, limiting both functionality and family connection. The homeowner wanted a home that felt more aligned with the way their family lives, gathers, and makes memories with a welcoming kitchen at the center of it all.
- **Honor cabin's history**
 - While many recommended a teardown and new build, the homeowner wanted to preserve the family history, memories, location, and character woven into the original cabin and 1985 addition—elements that held too much meaning to leave behind.
- **Significant maintenance or infrastructure updates**
 - Rather than continually addressing individual issues, a comprehensive remodel will address the home holistically—from mechanical systems and building-envelope improvements to finishes and design—while preserving its original character.

Exterior

EXTERIOR - BEFORE & AFTER

Relocated front entrance to create a welcoming arrival



Client pain points

- The exterior lacked architectural character and cohesion.
- The front entry lacked a clear sense of arrival.
- Aging decks and exterior materials compromised the lake view.
- Walkways and drop zones lacked accessibility and function.



How our team helped

- Restored the cabin's character by preserving defining architectural elements and family history while introducing timeless materials including stone, stamped concrete, fir timbers and LP siding.
- Reoriented the front entry to create a welcoming, clearly defined arrival with space for gathering.
- Replaced the wraparound deck with two distinct decks to maximize lake views and expand lakeside windows.
- Improved exterior circulation with more accessible walkways and strategically placed drop zones for easier everyday arrivals.

LAKE SIDE - BEFORE & AFTER

Wrap around deck (left) blocked view of the lake



EXTERIOR - DETAILS

Aesthetic transformation

- Maintenance-free decking for lasting beauty and durability.
- Natural stone used throughout, including substantial stone columns and stairs leading to the lake.
- Under-decking system creates a finished, covered patio area below.
- Stone-wrapped chimney chase finished with a custom metal shroud.
- Covered grilling structure designed to extend outdoor entertaining.
- Stamped concrete walkway and driveway for a cohesive, low-maintenance arrival experience.

Function enhancements

- Enlarged existing deck to create more usable outdoor living & entertaining space.
- Added screened porch & adjacent deck for flexible 3-season living.
- Created direct, convenient access between the kitchen, screen porch and outdoor spaces.
- Improved access from the home to the lake with new, more accessible walkways and stairs.
- Reconfigured exterior entry and approach to create a more welcoming and intuitive arrival.

Innovation & craftsmanship

- Thoughtfully integrated new exterior elements with the character and proportions of the original structure.
- Detailed natural stonework across columns, chimney and lake stairs to create visual continuity and a sense of permanence.
- Custom chimney provides a refined architectural finish while protecting a highly visible exterior element.
- Under-decking system carefully detailed to create a dry, finished outdoor room beneath the elevated deck.
- Designed the outdoor grilling structure as an architectural extension of the home rather than a standalone feature.
- Crafted new lake-facing spaces to maximize views while improving durability, accessibility and everyday usability.



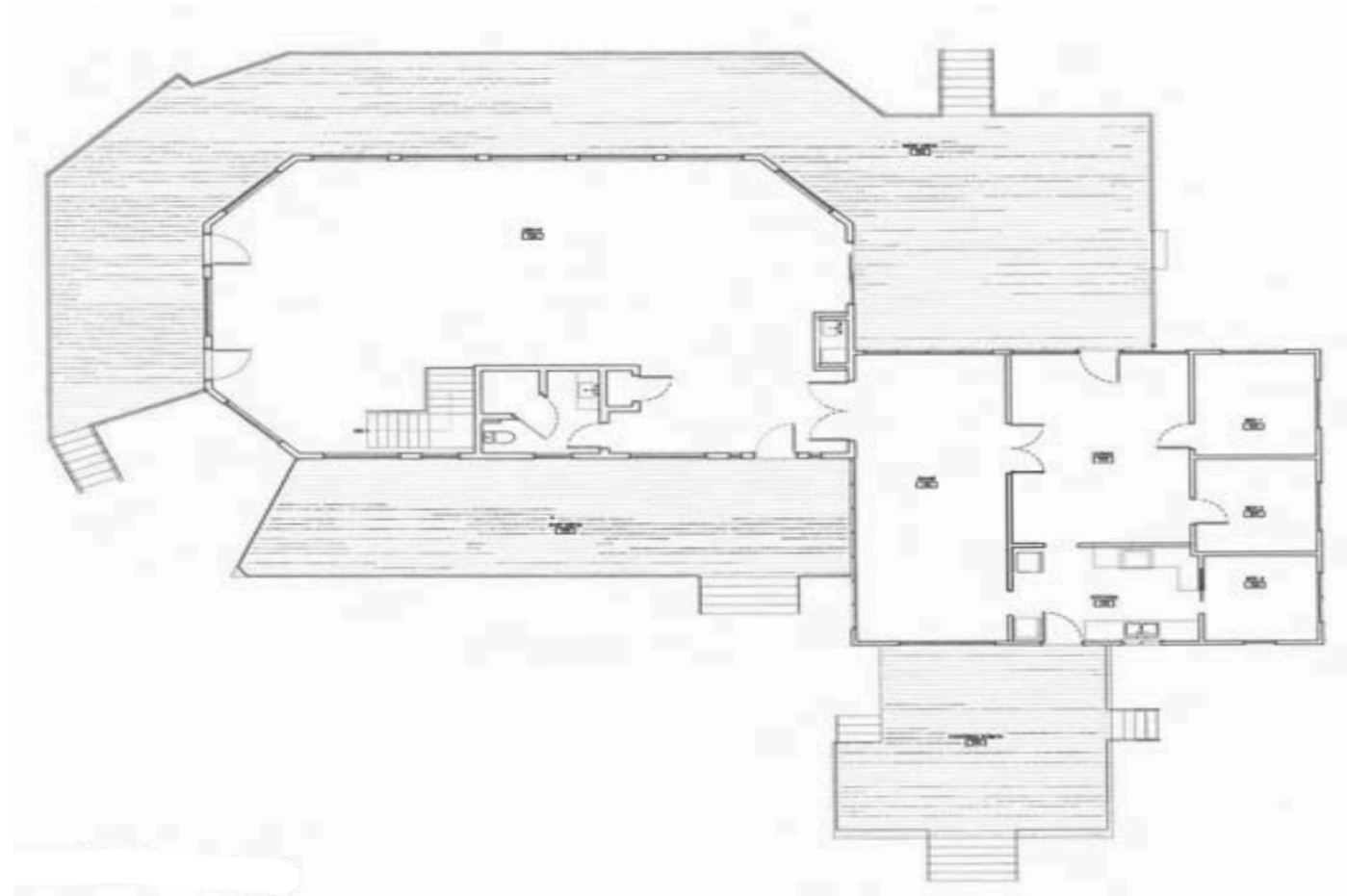
EXTERIOR - CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



Main Level

MAIN LEVEL

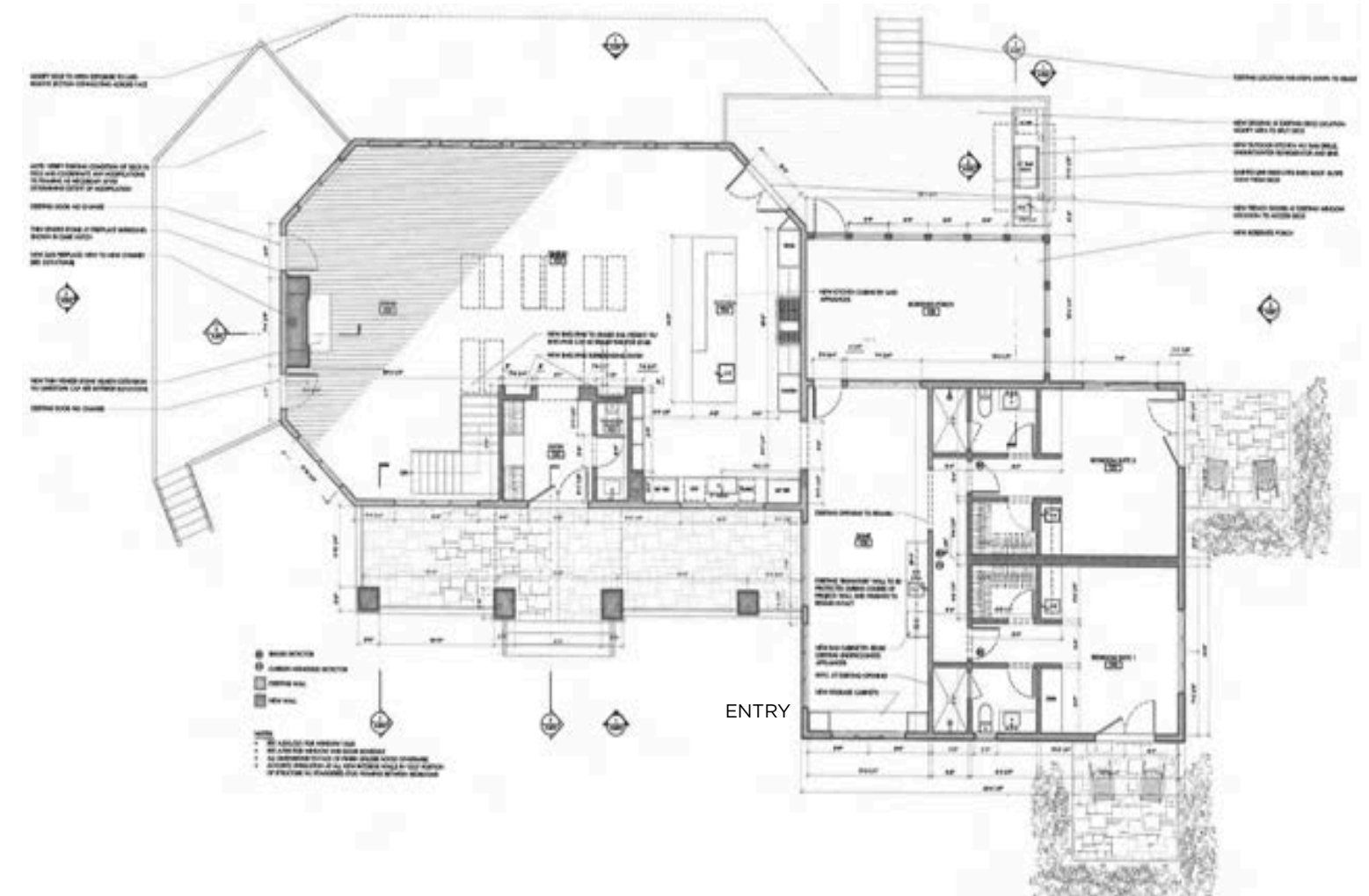
BEFORE



Client pain points

- Kitchen was isolated from the primary gathering spaces.
- Bedrooms lacked scale and functionality.
- Lacked a defined, welcoming entry.
- Excessive wood across ceilings, walls and floors created a dated, heavy feel.
- 100-year-old structure and 1985 addition felt disconnected.

AFTER



How our team helped

- Reimagined the kitchen into the heart of the home and better connect gathering spaces.
- Reconfigured three bedrooms into two private ensuites.
- Centered and enhanced the front entry to give the cabin a stronger architectural presence.
- Selected a more balanced mix of materials and finishes to soften the abundance of wood while preserving the cabin's character.
- Solved complex structural and spatial challenges to improve flow, accessibility and connectivity creating a cohesive four-season living environment.

KITCHEN - BEFORE & AFTER

Bar space (left) turned into kitchen space. Original kitchen was in an unconditioned space.



KITCHEN - DETAILS

Aesthetic transformation

- White oak ceiling and flooring bring warmth and continuity.
- Mix of natural white oak and painted cabinetry adds depth and visual balance.
- Taj Mahal quartzite countertops provide a refined, durable focal point
- Custom hood with brass accents serves as a statement architectural feature.
- Satin brass hardware introduces warmth and subtle contrast.
- Built-in display area creates space to showcase meaningful pieces.

Function enhancements

- Upgraded appliances support the demands of everyday family living and entertaining.
- Dedicated coffee station adds convenience while keeping the main work zone streamlined.
- Generously sized island provides ample prep space and casual seating.
- Two sinks—one dedicated to prep and one to cleanup—improve workflow and efficiency.

Innovation & craftsmanship

- Added beams within the existing hipped ceiling to enhance architectural character and visually define the kitchen.
- Integrated electrical outlets into the window ledge rather than the backsplash for a cleaner, more refined appearance.



LIVING ROOM - BEFORE & AFTER



DINING & LIVING ROOM - DETAILS

Client pain points

- The large, open space lacked clearly defined zones.
- Limited storage.
- Entry lacked a defined sense of arrival.
- Existing stove lacked comfort and function for year-round living and entertaining.
- Interior felt visually heavy.

Aesthetic transformation

- White oak ceiling and flooring bring warmth and continuity.
- Mix of natural white oak and painted cabinetry adds depth and visual balance.
- Satin brass hardware introduces warmth and refined contrast.
- Custom built-in bookcase and additional storage add character and functionality.
- New front entry features an arched door and convenient access to a powder room.
- Replaced the Franklin stove with a gas fireplace that complements the cabin's architecture.

Function enhancements

- Significantly increased storage throughout the space.
- Added a dedicated sitting area to create a more comfortable, flexible gathering space.
- Improved the connection between the entry, living space and adjacent rooms including the kitchen for a more cohesive main level.

Innovation & craftsmanship

- Added architectural beams within the existing hipped ceiling to enhance character and give the space greater visual presence.
- Integrated a new fireplace stone surround to complement the existing architecture and materials.



GAME ROOM - BEFORE & AFTER

Client pain points

- Keep wall of family signatures.
- The space was part of the original seasonal cabin and lacked the insulation and functionality needed for year-round use.

How our team helped

- **Aesthetic changes**
 - Removed existing skylights and carefully sourced matching wood to seamlessly integrate with original wood ceiling.
 - Added glass-front cabinet doors with open backs, allowing the treasured signatures to remain visible.
 - Added custom built-ins and a bench to provide storage and comfortable seating.
 - Enlarged windows to bring in more natural light and strengthen the connection to the surrounding landscape.
- **Innovation**
 - Framed and insulated above the existing roof to keep the original exposed rafters visible while making the space comfortable for year-round use.
 - Preserved the signature wall as a focal point rather than concealing it behind new cabinetry, allowing the family history to remain part of the room's design.



ENSUITE - BEFORE & AFTER

Client pain points

- Original seasonal structure needed to be transformed into a comfortable, year-round space.
- Wanted private bedrooms with private bathrooms and direct access to the outdoors.

How our team helped

- **Aesthetic changes**
 - Created two private guest suites with dedicated bathrooms and walk-in closets.
 - Integrated a built-in workspace and storage for added functionality.
 - Added direct patio access for easy outdoor connection.
 - Preserved the original exposed rafters and wood ceiling, maintaining continuity with the cabin's historic character.
- **Innovation**
 - Updated mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems and added insulation for comfortable, four-season use.
 - Blended the new work seamlessly with the original structure while preserving the cabin's historic character.
 - Created a private guest spaces with modern amenities, including a coffee bar and a dedicated workspace.



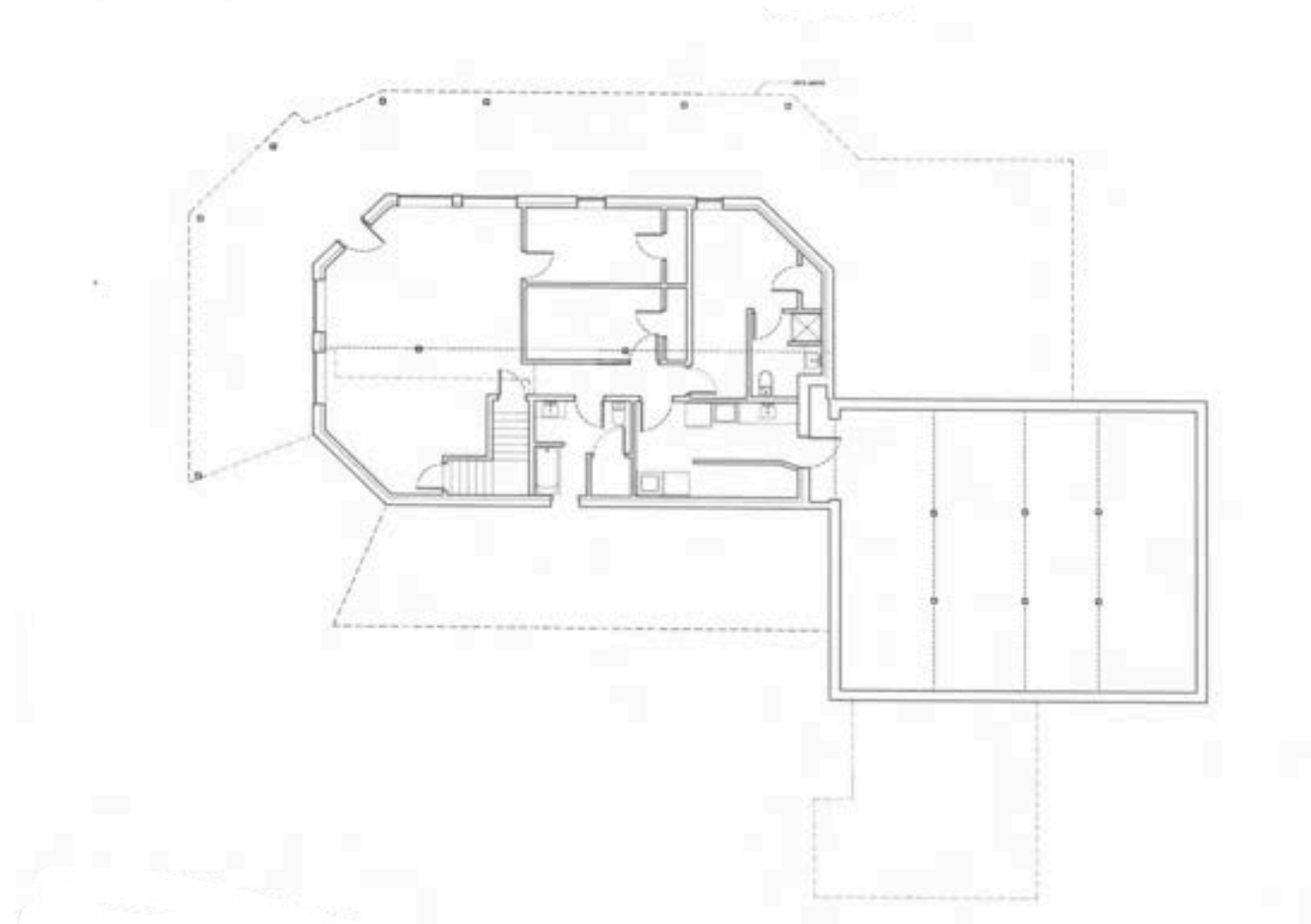
MAIN LEVEL - CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



Lower Level

LOWER LEVEL

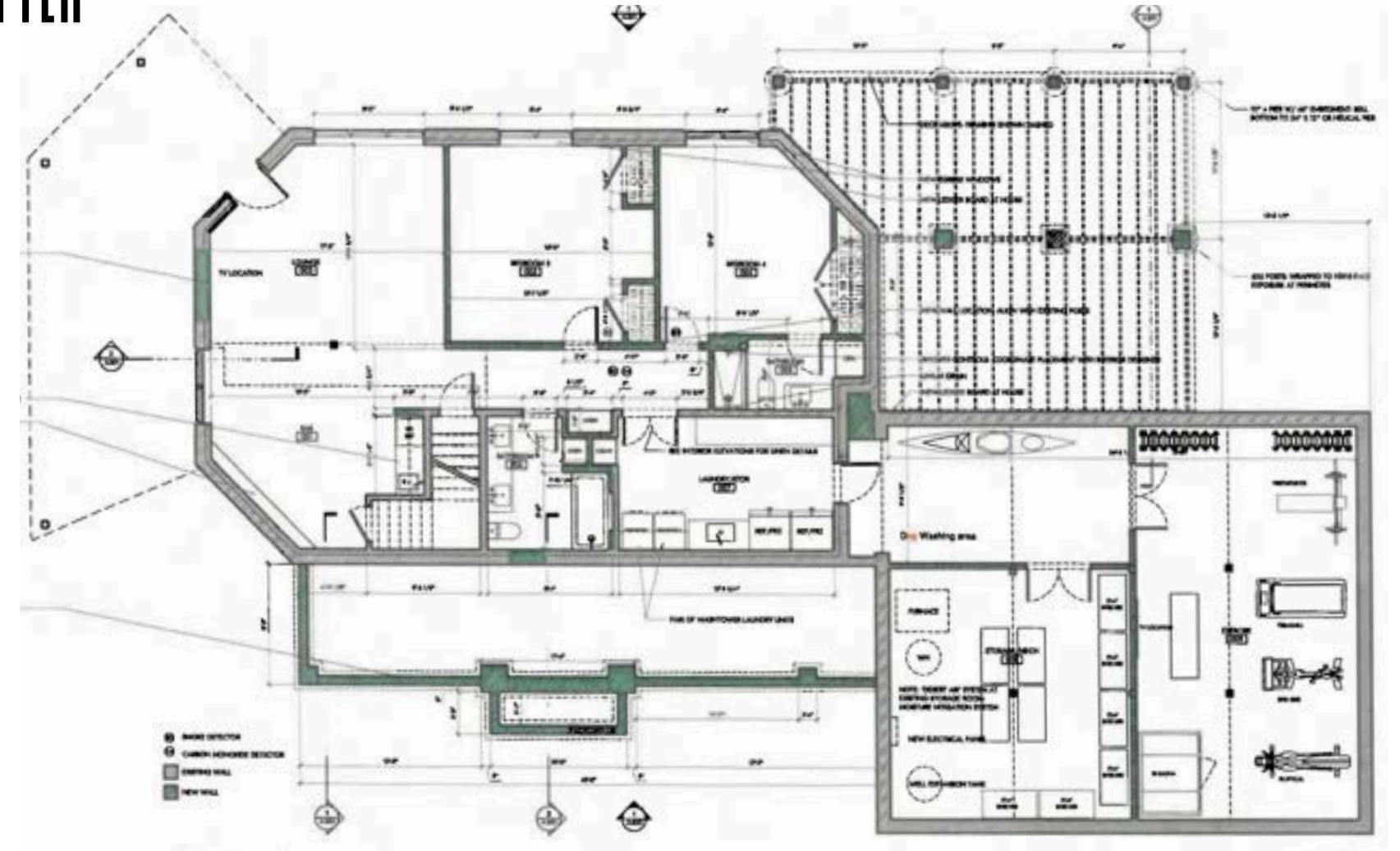
BEFORE



Client pain points

- Bedrooms felt undersized and lacked natural light.
- Laundry room was dark, cramped and inefficient.
- Desired a dedicated bar area for entertaining.
- Existing bathroom layouts felt awkward and lacked functionality.
- No dedicated space for exercise.

AFTER



How our team helped

- Reconfigured bedrooms to improve natural light and provide code-compliant egress.
- Relocated mechanical room into unfinished space creating a dedicated laundry with 2 washers/2 dryers and ample storage.
- Reworked one bathroom with a larger dual-sink vanity and linen storage.
- Created an ensuite bathroom with a dedicated shower and linen cabinet.
- Added a dedicated entertainment bar to support hosting and gathering.
- Finished the previously unfinished basement to add an exercise room, dog wash station, mechanical room and custom storage with workbench.

UNFINISHED SPACE - BEFORE & AFTER

Unfinished space transformed into mechanical room, dog wash, and exercise rooms



BEDROOM - BEFORE & AFTER



LOWER LEVEL - DETAILS

Aesthetic transformation

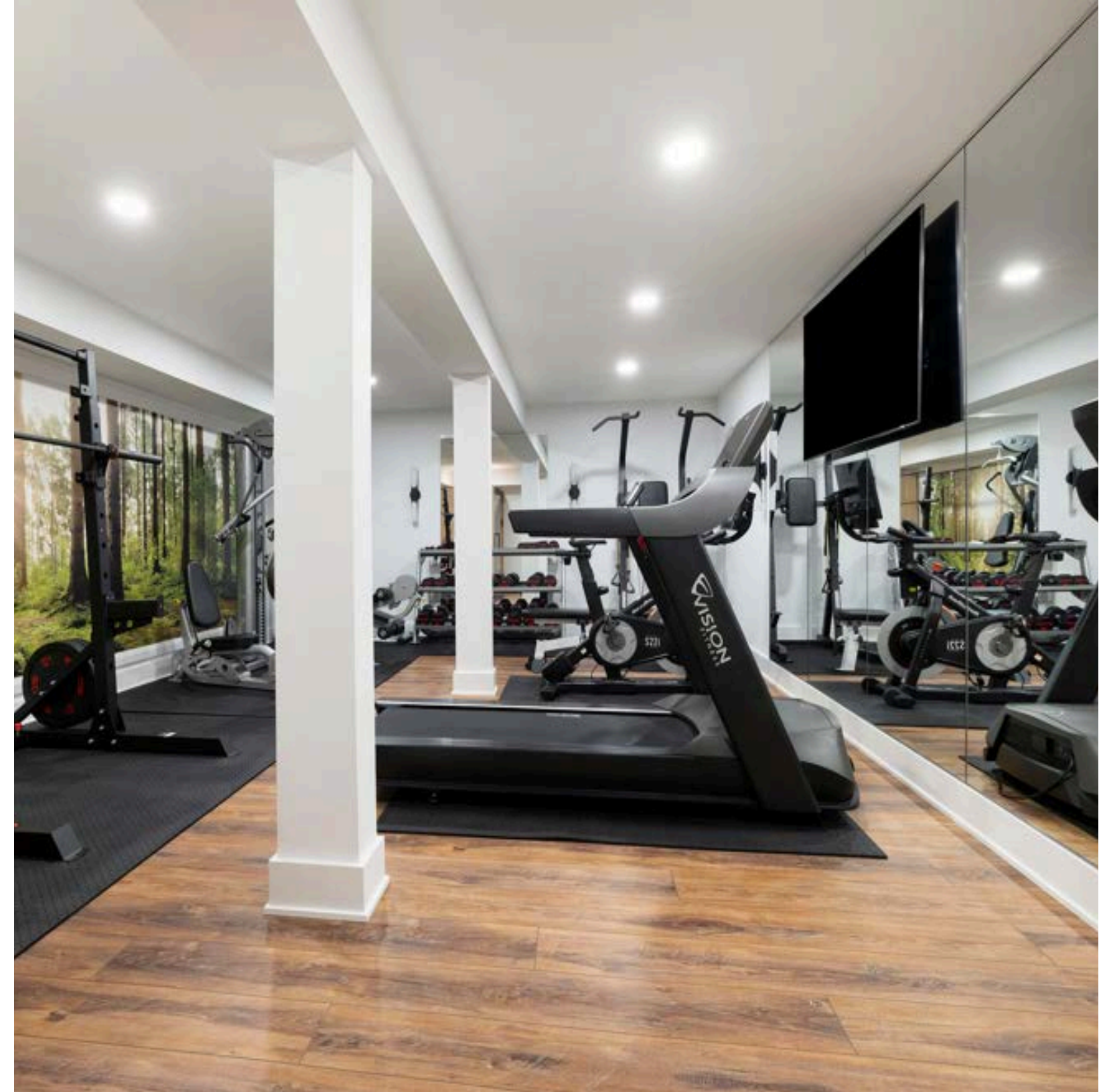
- LVT flooring throughout provides a durable, low-maintenance finish.
- Ceramic tile and in-floor heating elevate both bathrooms with added comfort.
- Lighter finishes and materials brighten the interiors and create a more inviting feel.
- Refined bathroom layouts and finishes create a cohesive, polished aesthetic.

Function enhancements

- Removed the kitchenette and created a laundry room with storage.
- New mechanical, plumbing, electrical throughout the home.
- Combined three undersized bedrooms to create two spacious bedrooms.
- Relocated the mechanical room to create a larger laundry with two washers, two dryers and added storage.
- Reconfigured the bathrooms with a larger dual-sink vanity, ensuite shower and integrated linen storage.
- Finished the basement with an exercise room, dog wash, mechanical room and custom storage.
- Added a dedicated entertainment bar for hosting and gathering.

Innovation & craftsmanship

- Added heated floors into the two bathrooms for an extra layer of comfort.
- Thoughtfully integrated extensive new storage and utility spaces without compromising the home's livability.
- Transformed previously unfinished basement space into a highly functional extension of the home.
- Designed additional storage cabinetry with a built-in workbench to maximize utility and organization.



LOWER LEVEL - CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



Challenges

The project's tight 9-month timeline was a challenge in itself, compounded by significant issues uncovered only after construction began. Each discovery demanded immediate problem-solving and had to be seamlessly integrated into the schedule without compromising the deadline or craftsmanship. The team responded with an "all-hands-on-deck" approach.

At the heart of the challenge was balancing two eras of construction: a century-old cabin and a 1980s addition, each with distinct materials, methods and performance issues. Ice damming, inadequate skylight insulation, basement water intrusion and extensive rodent infiltration required thoughtful solutions. Equally important was preserving a treasured wall of family signatures dating back more than a century. The result is a home that respects its history while achieving the performance, comfort and longevity expected of a modern retreat.

CONVERTING A SEASONAL STRUCTURE INTO A YEAR-ROUND CABIN: BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Biggest Challenge

- The original cabin was built for seasonal use—not Midwest winters. Converting it into a year-round retreat required addressing the building envelope, insulation, heating, plumbing, and mechanical systems without compromising the character and proportions that made the historic cabin special. The existing structure also presented limitations that had to be carefully integrated with modern infrastructure.
- The goal was twofold: Modernize the cabin from the inside out for four-season living while preserving the authenticity, character, and memories embedded in the original structure.

Additional Challenges:

- Client and designer wanted to preserve the exposed rafters instead of adding a dropped ceiling.
- Multiple openings were discovered in the exterior rim framing, allowing significant mouse intrusion.
- Water was leaking through multiple locations in the basement foundation.



Original structure and 1980s addition



Family signature wall

CONVERTING A SEASONAL STRUCTURE INTO A YEAR-ROUND CABIN: BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Innovation & solving the issue

- The entire building envelope was upgraded with new windows, patio doors, insulation, and building wrap. All-new HVAC systems, including multiple zones, were installed along with upgraded electrical service, lighting controls, and security systems.
- The roof was over-framed to allow insulation from above while maintaining the original character.
- The openings were sealed to improve the cabin's building envelope and protect it for year-round use.
- A new drain tile system was installed to address water intrusion and improve long-term basement protection.



Drain Tile



Insulation

CONVERTING A SEASONAL STRUCTURE INTO A YEAR-ROUND CABIN: BIGGEST CHALLENGE



Ice dam



Overframed and insulated



Ready for roofing

Thank you