



From Crowded Cave to Zoned Haven

Residential Bath \$70,000 to \$100,000

2026 NARI ROTY MINNESOTA AWARDS

From Enclosed to Zoned

Background

An untouched, decades-old bathroom featuring deep blue walls, a black pedestal sink, a black tank toilet, and a black tub/shower surround finished in small-format blue mosaic tile. The layout was tight, poorly lit, lacked double-sink capacity, had no curbless access, and lacked separation between wet and dry zones. It felt more like a dark cave than a retreat.

Goals & Strategy

Full Reconfiguration: Gut and expand the footprint to reorganize the space into distinct wet and dry zones.

Creation of Key Zones: Allocate space for a curbless steam shower, a double-sink vanity, a furniture-style linen cabinet, and a separated toilet compartment.

Visual Expansion: Eliminate visual barriers and physical thresholds to make the 56–66 sq. ft. room read as significantly larger than it really is.



Before



After

Double Vanity & Storage

Furniture-style double-sink vanity with quartz countertops, backlit round mirrors, and an integrated full-height linen cabinet with pullout drawers.

Luxury Comforts

In-floor radiant heating and brushed brass/bronze fixture package (rain head, handheld wand, and body sprays).



Key Features

Private Bidet Compartment

Features a wall-mounted bidet toilet separated by a surface-mounted obscured glass barn door.

Curbless Steam Shower

Clad with a herringbone-pattern glazed tile accent wall, frameless glass enclosure, and a built-in horizontal niche.

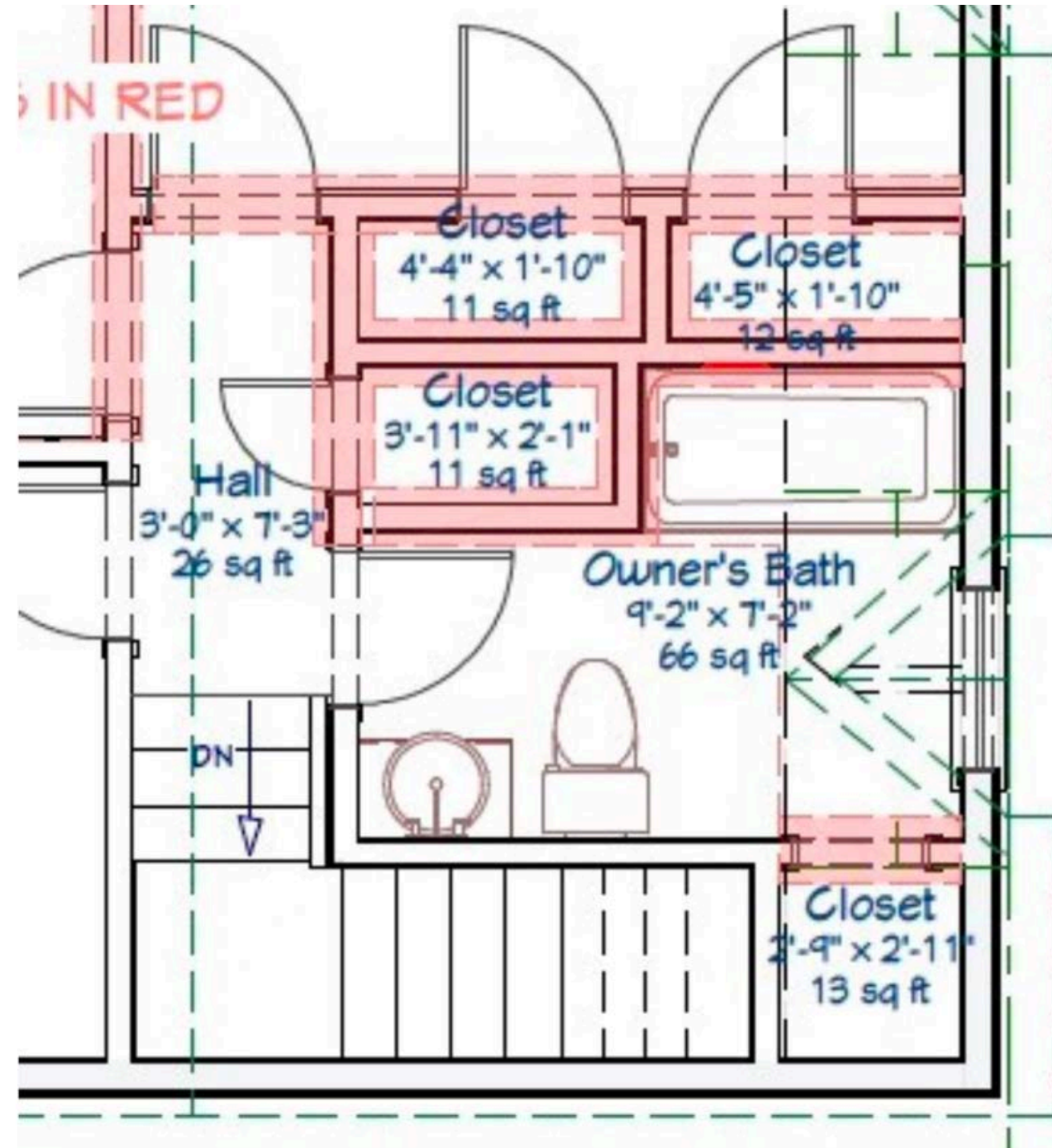


Plans

The reconfigured layout **expanded the owner's bath footprint** and reorganized it into **distinct wet and dry zones**, including:

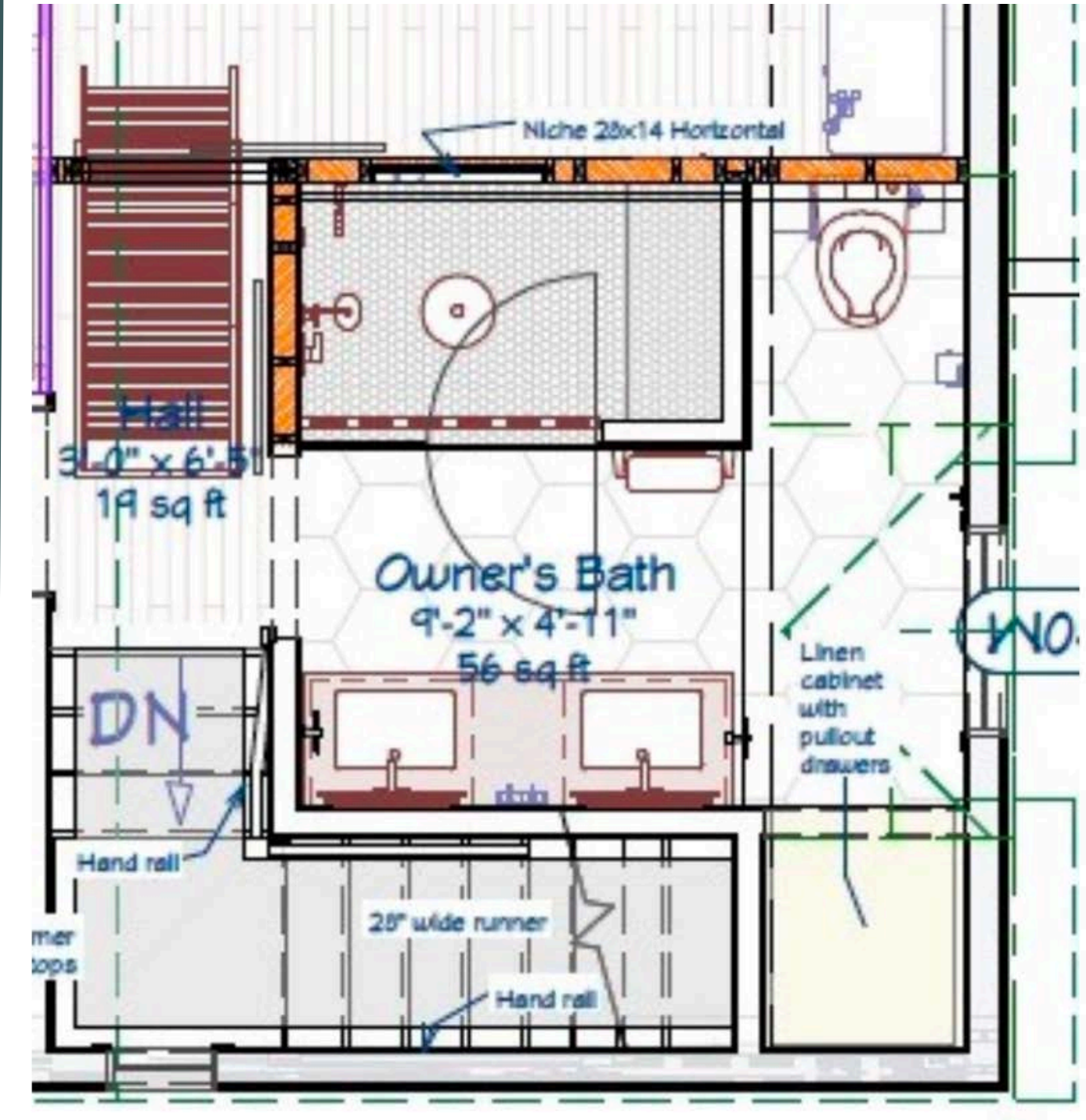
- Curbless steam shower
- Double-sink vanity run
- Separated toilet compartment with linen storage

As-Built



Owner's Bath Floor Plan – Overall layout with adjacent closets and hall.

New Plans

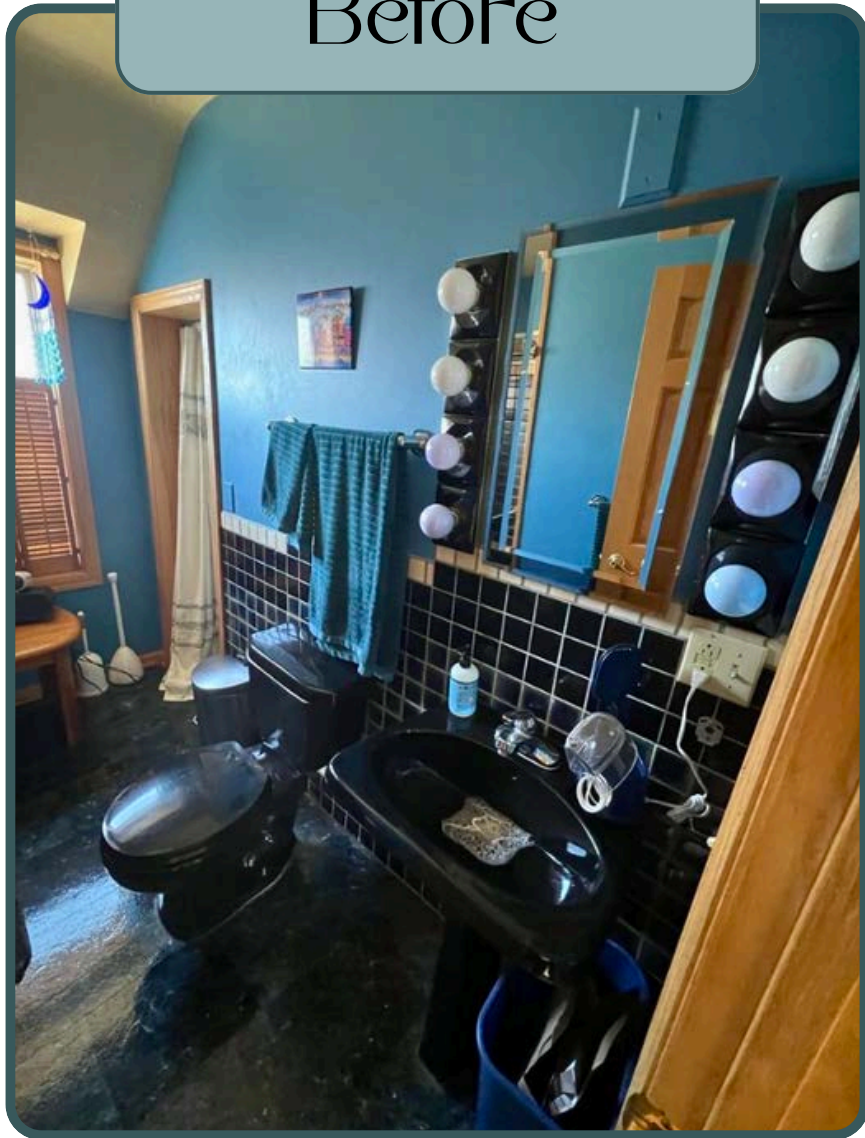


Detailed Plan – Steam shower niche, double-sink run, and linen cabinet with pullout drawers.

From Moody Blue...

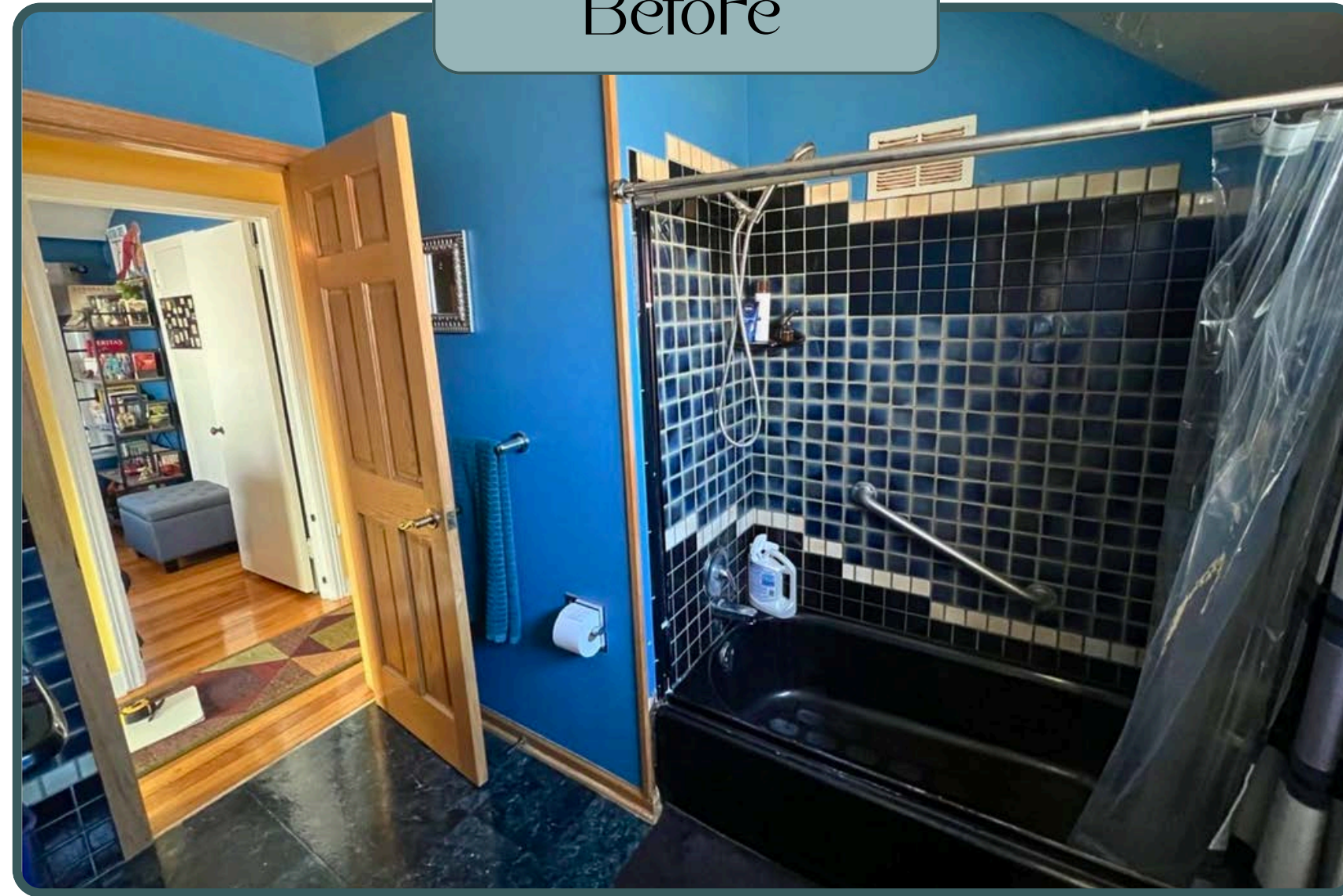
Saturated blue walls, dark black fixtures, a drop-in tub with a shower curtain, and a single recessed shelf for storage.

Before



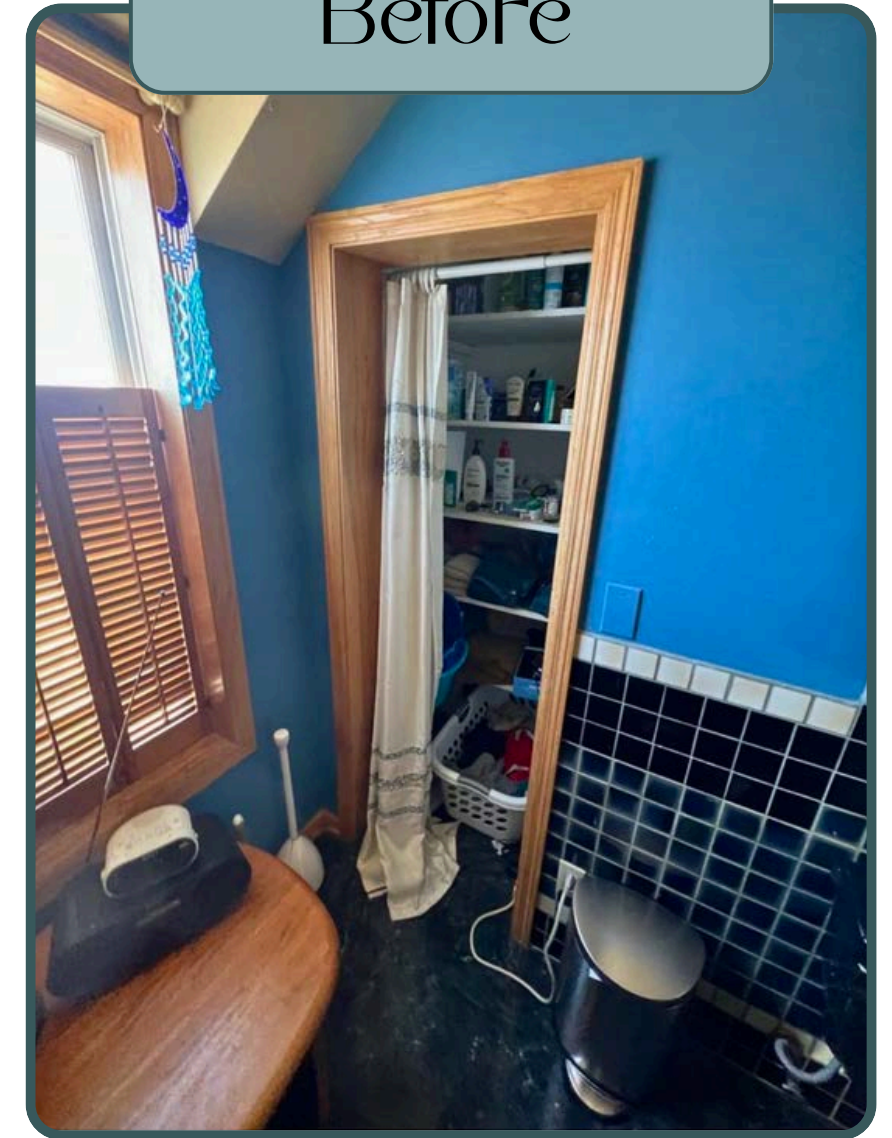
The original vanity – black pedestal sink, tank toilet, and dated mosaic tile.

Before



Tub/shower combination with grab bar and curtain, lacking a defined enclosure.

Before



Recessed shelving – the bath's only built-in storage.



...to Spa-Day Bright

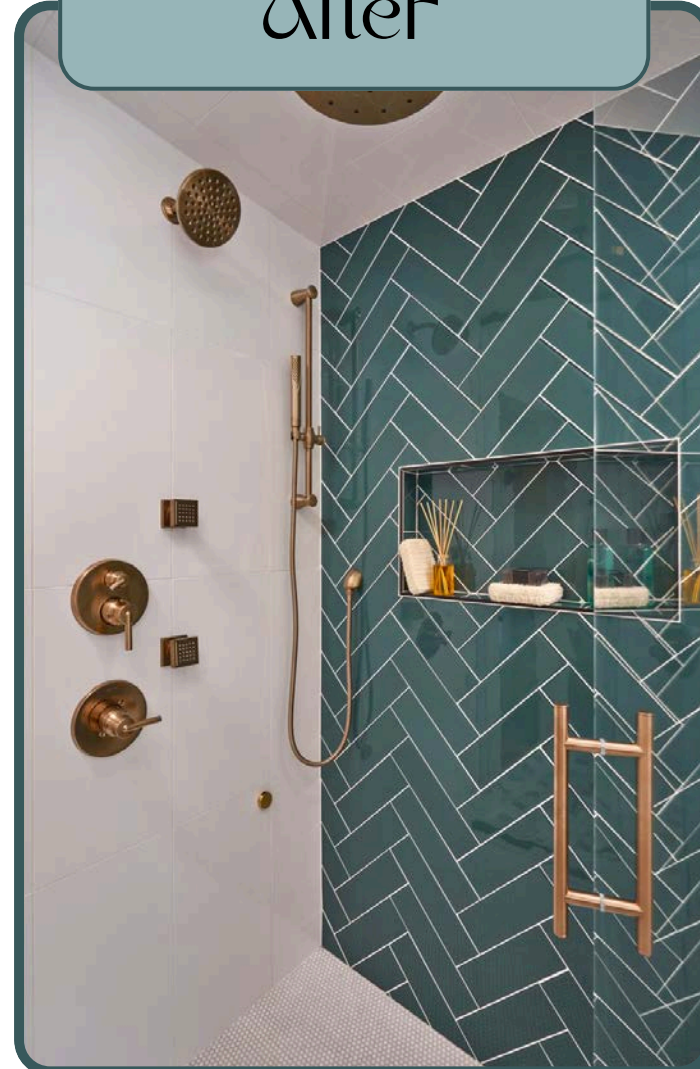
Bright, spa-like retreat with white tile, pale plaster, warm wood millwork, brass hardware, frameless glass, and custom storage throughout.

After



Curbless steam shower and private toilet compartment, **defining key bath zones.**

After



Herringbone-pattern tile accent wall **brightens space** and brings it into the 21st century.

After



Double-sink vanity and dedicated linen cabinet, significantly **increasing the bath's storage space.**

From Moody Blue to Spa-Day Bright

Side-by-side before-and-after comparisons.



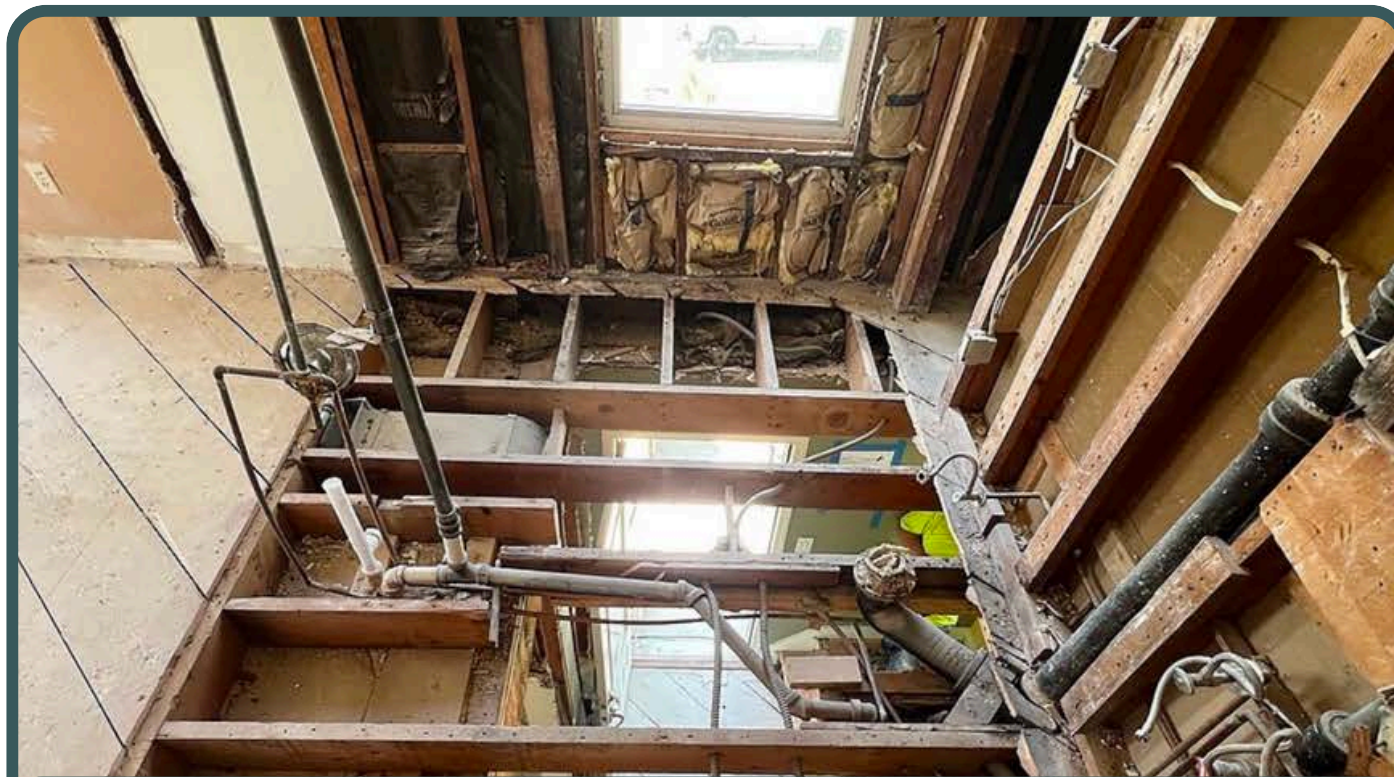
Challenges & Engineering

Plumbing Relocation

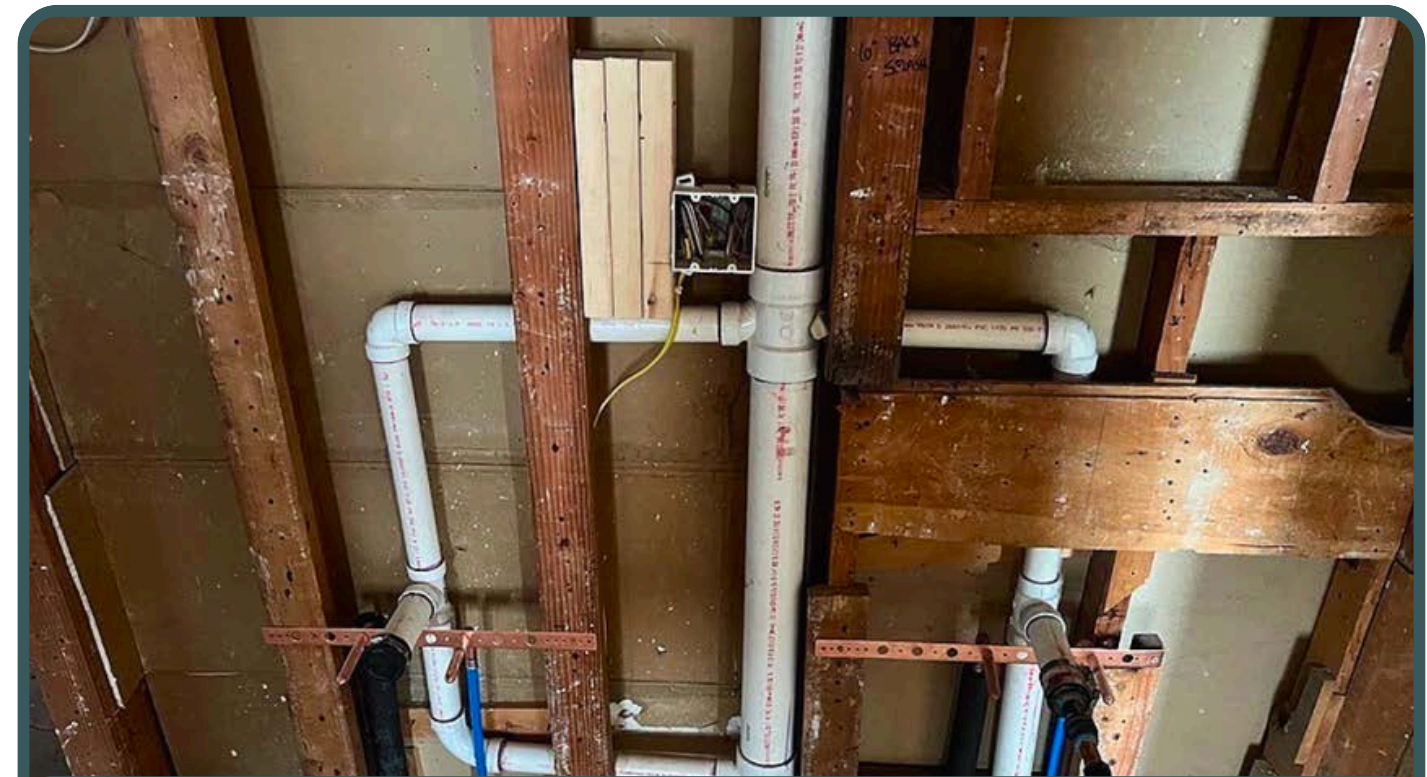
Relocating main waste and vent lines required navigating shallow, structural 2x8 floor joists that could not be notched or drilled without compromising structural integrity.

Architectural Soffit Solution

Rather than compromise the framing, the team dropped the ceiling in the front entry room directly below to route plumbing horizontally before tying into the stack. Designed as an intentional architectural soffit with recessed lighting, the feature extends gracefully into the home—turning a lower-level mechanical workaround into a deliberate design asset.



The original galvanized waste stack, exposed where the floor was opened between levels – the connection point the new PVC line had to reach.

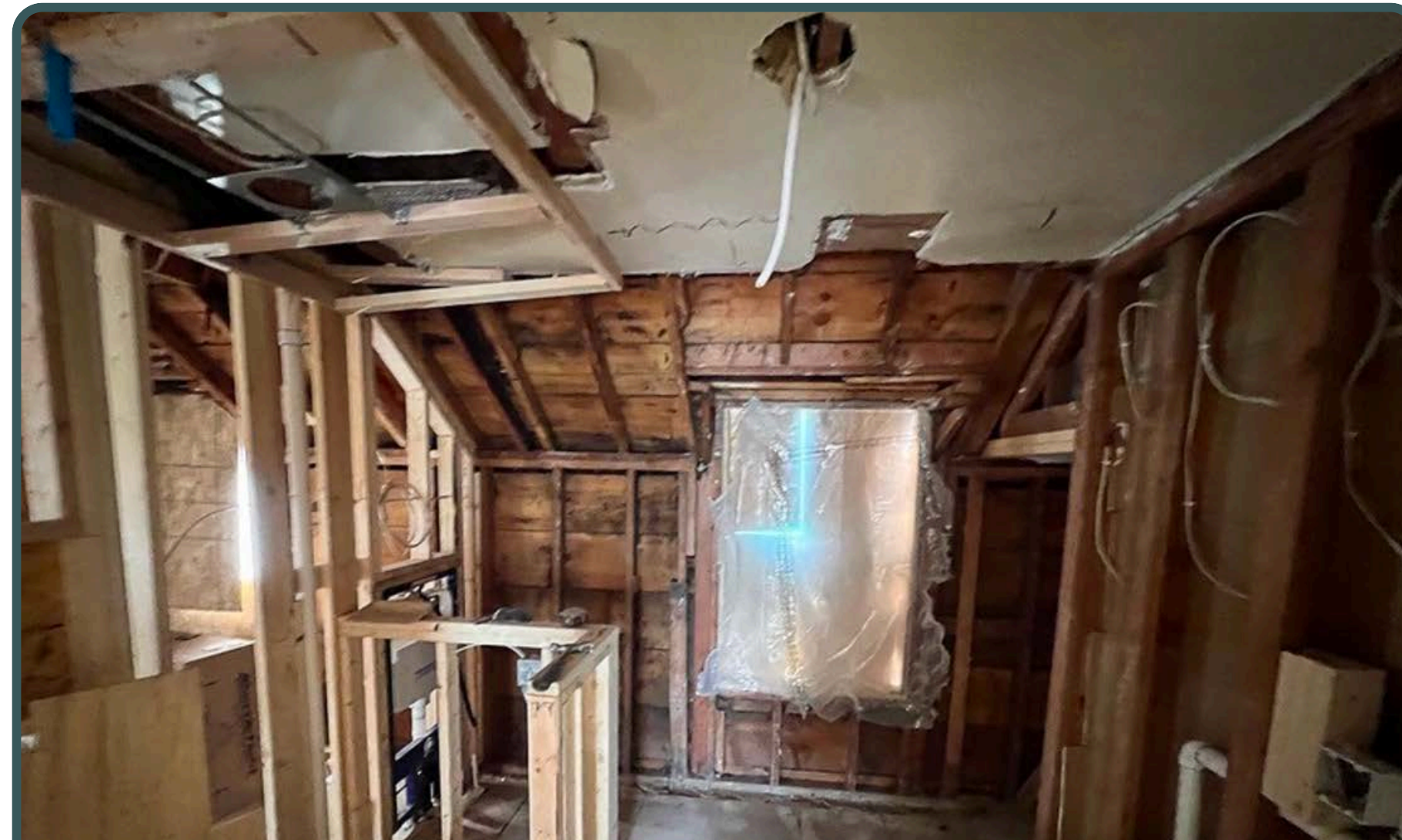


The new waste and vent stack was routed and strapped through the wall framing after the reroute.

Challenges & Engineering

Steam Shower Envelope

Limited roof depth above the sloped steam shower ceiling restricted framing space. High-performance closed-cell spray foam insulation was installed to guarantee a tight thermal and moisture barrier.



The sloped ceiling framing over the steam shower, before closed-foam insulation was added.

High-Density Stud Cavity Routing

With framing constraints on all sides, the crew pressed virtually every available stud cavity into service to route the complex array of plumbing, waste, vent, and supply lines directly to the fixtures.



Every available stud cavity was pressed into service for supply, waste, and vent lines feeding the new fixtures.

Precision Tile Integration

Executed flawless layout and pitch alignment for complex geometric floor mosaics running continuously into the curbless steam shower pan.

Spatial Innovation: The Illusion of More Room

Continuous Floor Plane

Wall-to-wall geometric mosaic tile runs seamlessly with zero threshold, drawing the eye outward across an unbroken floor plane.

Uninterrupted Sightlines

Clear, frameless glass replaces heavy framing and shower curtains, integrating the steam shower directly into the room's footprint.

Light Amplification

Replacing saturated blue and black surfaces with pale plaster and white tile allows ambient light to bounce, forcing dark corners to recede.





Functional & Aesthetic Enhancements

Expanded Layout & Key Zones

Upgraded from a single pedestal to a custom double-sink vanity, added a private toilet alcove, and converted a step-over tub into an accessible, curbless steam shower.

Integrated Millwork & Storage

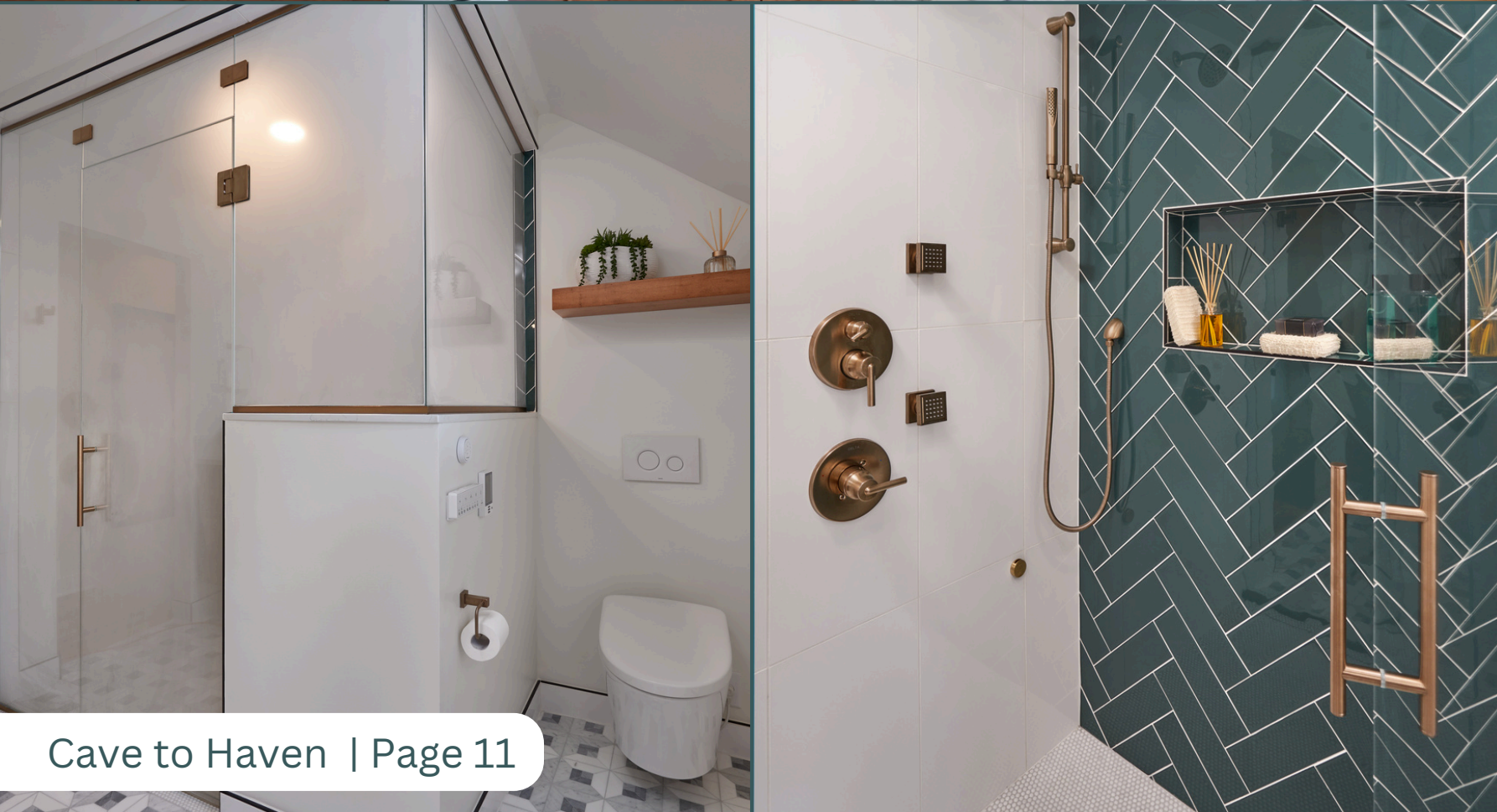
Replaced a dank closet and tiny recessed wall shelf with a full-height, pullout linen tower integrated seamlessly into the main vanity run.

Material & Palette Contrast

Paired warm natural wood cabinetry and rich brushed brass/bronze hardware with a striking herringbone-pattern glazed tile feature wall inside the steam shower.

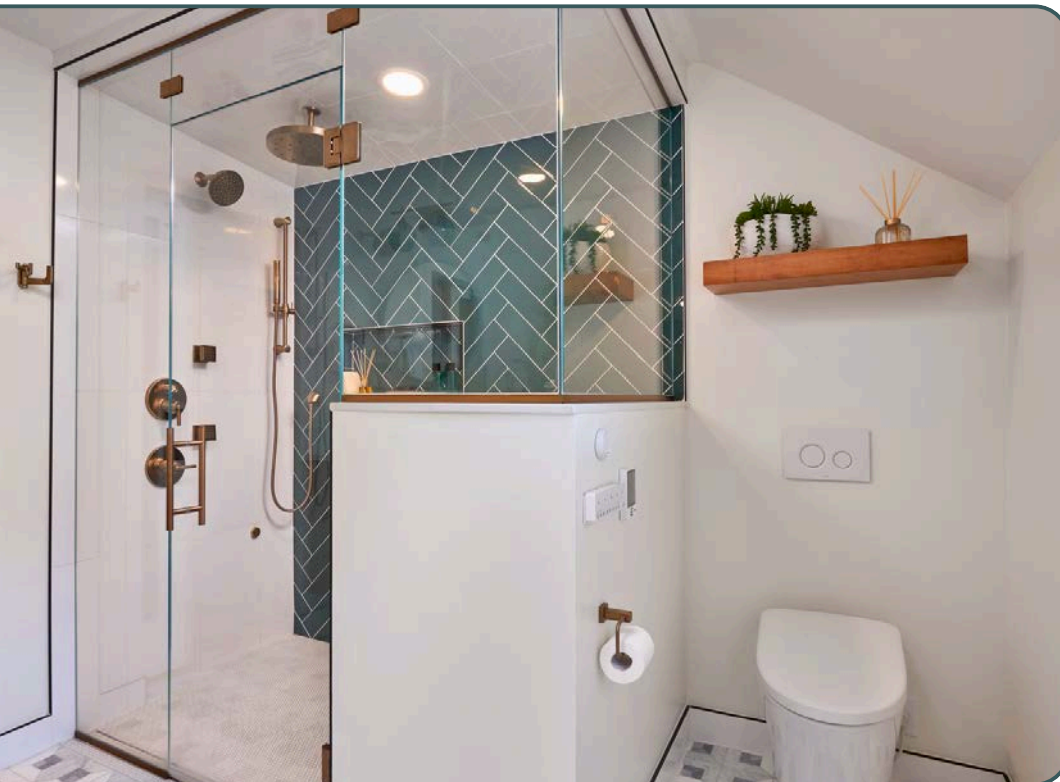
Thermal Comfort

Installed in-floor radiant heating across the entire tile footprint.



End Results

Delivered a high-end, modern spa bath that maximizes every square inch of space, turning structural framing challenges into an architectural soffit feature on the main floor below. The transformation successfully replaced a cramped, dark "blue cave" with a bright, luxurious, and highly functional herringbone retreat.





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