

# Urban Renewal

An industry veteran offers a guided tour through the remodel of her Brooklyn apartment kitchen

BY VILMA BARR

For nearly 30 years, I have been a design writer, specializing in contributing articles to magazines and writing books on commercial design. Although I am in contact with architects and interior designers almost daily on a professional basis, I never personally retained one. Until the fall of 1999 when I sold my studio apartment in Manhattan's Chelsea area and purchased a one-bedroom apartment in a small, nine-unit, 50-year-old building in Brooklyn Heights, a beautiful residential neighborhood directly across the East River from downtown Manhattan. It was a terrific experience for me to step

into the role of client after I had written so many stories for magazines and newspapers that included commentary on client/designer relationships.

My old studio had a small

## DETAILS

Interior Designer: Deborah Murphy, NY

Contractor: Leon Gonel

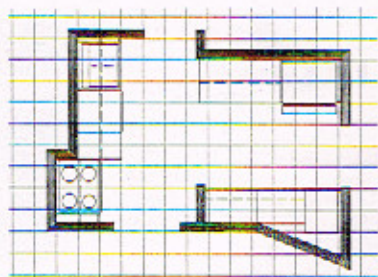
Manufacturers: Guita Behbin, Dura Maid—cabinetry; Tiles-A Refined Selection—tiles; Maytag—refrigerator and range; Kenmore—range hood; KitchenAid—dishwasher; Franke—sink; KWC—faucet

*The kitchen renovation added storage almost to the ceiling, with room to spare for planter boxes painted to match the neutral shade of Oriental silk used in the living room.*

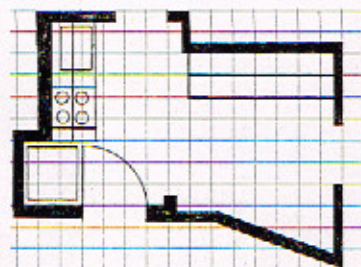




Lighting includes under-cabinet units as well as one central ceiling fixture. There's plenty of space for cookbooks and decorative pieces. The tile backsplash adds accents of color.



The renovated kitchen includes increased storage and a brightened look that blends with the adjacent living room.



In the previous kitchen, appliances had been jammed along one wall, making the flooring the sole salvageable feature.

kitchen and it was difficult for more than one person to work in it. Whoever was in the kitchen couldn't easily hear or see guests in the adjoining living/dining area. Since I entertain frequently, this was a major problem.

#### A NEW START

Things weren't much better at the new place. Nothing could be saved from the existing kitchen except the original hardwood floor, which was in good condition. Of the total expenditure (\$28,500) for the kitchen renovation, approximately 40% was spent on the cabinets and counters. An almost equal amount, 38%, went to interior designer Deborah Murphy for consultation and design fees, commissions on purchases, and to the contractor, electrician and plumber. The balance, which came to 22% of the total, was apportioned for appliances, tile, painting, floor refinishing and installation.

#### OPEN AND BRIGHT

Murphy and I decided to make the kitchen seem as large and bright as possible. The existing kitchen had all the appliances along one wall; we determined that at one time there had been a wall separating the food preparation area from the dining area. I wanted as much counter space and storage as possible, and a bright contemporary environment. I did not want wood, but rather preferred a smooth, but not shiny surface for the cabinets and counters.

The existing kitchen/dining area has been combined

to create a functional, pleasant and sophisticated kitchen. There are three counters, including one that is used as a desk. The cabinets extend up to within 14" of the ceiling. Items from my collection of artwork, wall décor and framed photographs look wonderful in the new kitchen environment. All the appliances are white and blend in with the smooth and visually coordinated look throughout the space.

The kitchen was painted a neutral, Oriental silk color to match the living room walls so there is color continuity between the two spaces, which are separated by a wall with a pointed arch opening. Custom-made planter boxes for the top of the long wall in the kitchen are painted in the same Oriental silk.

Murphy created a special tile pattern incorporating colors in the kitchen. There is under-cabinet illumination on three sides of the room in addition to an overhead light fixture.

Guita Behbin from Dura Maid Industries in Manhattan contributed to the success of the final job. She offered practical suggestions regarding the overall layout and the type of cabinetry that would work best in the space. She also coordinated delivery of the cabinets and counters. **KBB**

*Vilma Barr is the owner of BPES/Barr Publicity & Editorial Services, which serves corporate clients in the design field by developing communications and sales support programs, including public relations and direct mail campaigns.*