

the NOT SO BIG project

instead of a big expansion, a redesign to perfectly suit their living style



SPOTLIGHT

project description

Type:	Redesigned renovation and addition.
Contractor:	EG Stoltzfus Designed Homes & Remodeling (see ad on inside front cover)
Trade Partners:	B & B's Custom Trim, Inc. (see ad p. 44) Century Spouting Company, Inc. (see ad p. 46) Fleming Tile & Marble (see ad p. 38) Good Electric, LLC (see ad p. 40) Good Painting (see ad p. 44) JG Graybill Plumbing, Inc. (see ad p. 42) Kevin Stoltzfus Hardwood Floors (see ad p. 40) Martin Appliance (see ad p. 38) R & L Siding LLC (see ad p. 46) Thos. Somerville Co. (see ad p. 42)
Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand kitchen and pantry and remove hallway from these spaces • Integrate family room and kitchen spaces allowing for large gatherings and informal style • Create welcoming “family and friends” back entrance with landing area/closet • Add a dedicated powder room and home management space • Develop a second floor laundry room • Prepare the home for aging-in-place with future 1st floor bedroom suite in mind • Maintain a space for “away” time and separate TV viewing in the new open floor plan • Expand living/sleeping space in basement with egress and bathroom • Bring efficiency and lower operating costs home through ground source heat pump
Scope:	Although the addition to the home turned out to be relatively small compared to many of EG Stoltzfus projects, the impact was not small to this 1980's Cape Cod. EG Stoltzfus achieved through the reallocation of space and integration of adjacent areas in ways that makes the house live just right for the owners—comfortable and welcoming. This was accomplished while staying on scale with the original house and meeting additional goals of lower energy use and lower maintenance.

When Bill Patrick, Senior Designer and Manager of the Remodeling Division at EG Stoltzfus Designed Homes & Remodeling, was first contacted by homeowners' Ruth and Jonas, he knew he had a challenge on his hands. Unlike most homeowners who address space deficiencies by simply building expansive additions, these homeowners were looking for a redesign of their existing space so

that whatever they needed to add on would be minimal. It wasn't that their lot size couldn't accommodate a larger expansion—they had plenty of space to do so. No, one of their primary goals included maintaining, to the extent possible, the original scale of their 1980's vintage Cape Cod. To that end, and to accommodate the homeowners wish for a more open-floor layout, a thoughtful redesign of the existing space was necessary.

As Bill would tell us during our interview, “although adding on is often the easiest solution, to redevise and redefine under-utilized space in a manner that makes sense for the homeowners requires a great deal of thought and sharing of ideas. Following the movement popularized by Sarah Susanka [famed architect and author of *The Not So Big House*], Ruth and Jonas expressed a desire to make their square footage more liveable—with overlap-

ping uses instead of segregated, single-use rooms. And rather than a huge operating cost and maintenance associated with increasing square footage, their focus was to maximize the space—making it more welcoming and energy efficient.”

As you will see in our photos, the challenge before Bill was met and the homeowners could not be more



pleased with the result. During our interview, you will hear how important collaboration was between the homeowners and the design/build professional in the project's ultimate success. As you'll learn, design egos were left at the door.

In the *Project Description* on the opening spread, EG Stoltzfus provided us with a listing of your project goals. Tell us more about your motivation?



Ruth: Initially, and this goes back many years, I think it was the family room that we wanted to expand. It wasn't a large enough place for us to gather. The house—which I guess was typical for the time it was built—was cut up into very small rooms. We wanted a more open flow to ease the access to the kitchen, the family room and dining room.

Jonas: While that's all true, I still think the kitchen was the driving force...the real impetus.

Ruth: And to think that when we purchased the home in 1994, the kitchen was actually larger and more modern than what we were used to. Over the years, we outgrew the space and wanted more modern appliances. Another thing that we wanted to accomplish was to prepare the first floor so that it could accommodate a master suite at some point—thus the renovated bath and the low-threshold walk-in shower. At the time, we both had elderly parents and were thinking that it would be a very nice set-up for their visits.

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Jonas: And while the kitchen was what motivated us most, the more we got into it, the idea of an open floor plan became equally important. We enjoy entertaining and the old floor plan with the small rooms just wasn't very well suited for gatherings.

Instead of remodeling, did you ever consider moving?

Ruth: Yes, over and over again. For well over 10 years! We just kept going back and forth—should we move or should we remodel?

Jonas: Over the years we'd look for awhile, then stop, then start again. At one point, we even bought a lot thinking that we'd eventually build. Needless to say, we changed our

minds. As for new homes already on the market, we looked pretty much right up until the time we started the project.

Ruth: What we found was that the houses with the open floor plan that we were looking for were in new developments that didn't have any mature landscaping. We enjoy the benefit and beauty of trees. Another thing that weighed heavily in our decision to stay here was our connection to the community and our neighbors.

Jonas: And it seemed that all those houses with open floor plans on the first floor, had way too much space on the second floor. We're at a stage in life where we really didn't need that anymore.



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Ruth: Another thing is that I really like how much sunshine we get here. We have a southern exposure

and the front of the house is sunny throughout most of the day. That would have been very hard to give up.

So with so many reasons to stay you decided to go through with your project. Tell us how you came upon EG Stoltzfus and why you decided to go with them?

Jonas: In addition to the great reputation that EG Stoltzfus has earned over the years, it helped that I knew the guy running their Remodeling Division. In fact, I've known Bill Patrick for years through the Rotary Club of Lancaster. And although we did contact one other builder early on for comparison, there was no comparison—we both felt much more comfortable with Bill. That was clear immediately.

Ruth: Bill also had a very good reputation and he didn't disappoint us. He was absolutely great to work with from the very start. Bill is a very careful listener and extremely patient. During the design phase, he worked and reworked countless permutations of plans trying to

accommodate us and not once did he show any sign of frustration.

With Bill being your friend was there any concern about jeopardizing that friendship if things didn't work out?

Jonas: I wasn't too concerned about that. I saw our relationship as a positive thing. My thinking was that because of our relationship he was someone I could trust—he wouldn't take advantage of us. That was actually reassuring.

Bill: To be perfectly honest, Jonas and Ruth didn't hire a



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friend—they hired an acquaintance. Our relationship grew into friendship as a result of this project.

Since the big challenge of this project seems to have been in the design phase, what can you tell us about that experience?

Jonas: Bill actually made it fun...I really enjoyed the process. As Ruth said earlier, Bill paid close attention to us—what we said, our ideas, our reactions to things he presented.

It became clear that he valued our input.

Ruth: It's true...Bill actively solicited our feedback and was very accepting of what we had to say or the changes we requested. He never once was defensive or showed any sign of a bruised ego.

Bill: I believe that good design evolves from a collaboration between the client and the designer. Too many designers feel that they

are obligated to produce a plan that the clients immediately fall in love with. They try really hard to WOW the client instead of teaming up with them to find out what THEY really want.

Jonas: This was very much a collaboration and I give Bill a lot of credit for his unwavering patience. Ruth and I are probably fussier than most and I admit that I'm really particular about things. Despite the challenges we no doubt presented along the way, I can honestly say that Bill was a pleasure to work with throughout the entire project.

A reference was made earlier regarding architect Sarah Susanka and her book, *The Not So Big House*. Aside from getting away from single-use spaces, what other Susanka-type themes did you apply here?

Bill: Instead of a massive expansion in square footage, the focus here was on improving the design and flow to better suit the family's life style. As a result, we were able to create the openness that was desired while minimizing the size of the addition.

Ruth: And in so doing there was room in the budget for a new geothermal heating and cooling system among other upgrades, primarily in finishes.

Moving on to the construction phase, did you live onsite while the work was going on?



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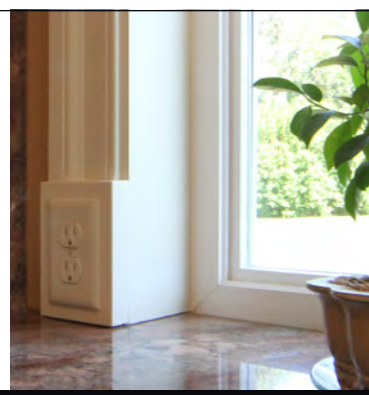


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Jonas: Thank goodness no—we moved to an apartment in Olde Hickory. Even though it was temporary, it was great living on a golf course.

Ruth: We also went on vacation early during that period. Not having to live onsite with the noise and commotion was a big relief—I'd recommend it.

How long did the project take and did everything stay on schedule?

Ruth: Although we spent over a year working on the plans, construction actually took less than four months.

Bill: In addition to the schedule that we developed, we set-up formal weekly progress meetings early on which were designed to help keep things on track. A project as complicated and detailed as this one requires a lot of decisions to be made—many of which are critical to the project's timeline. I think our meetings were successful in keeping everything on track. Hopefully, Ruth and Jonas also found them to be helpful.

Jonas: Yes, they were very helpful.



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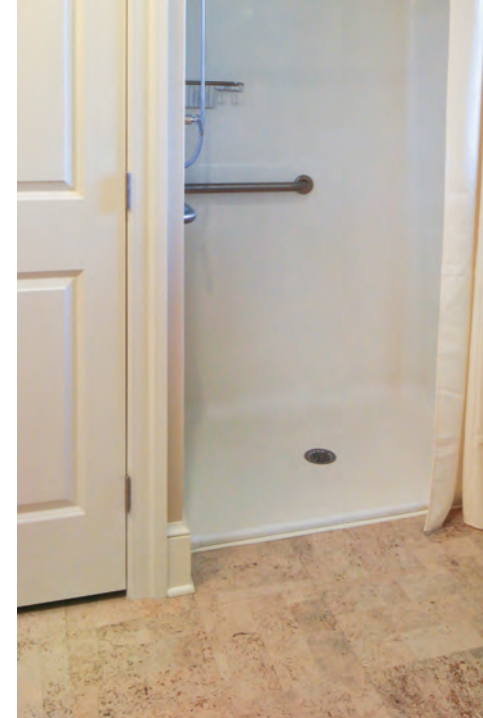
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Ruth: In addition, it was good coming in on a weekly basis to see the progress that was made and to get a report on what was to come.

Now with your spacious and beautiful kitchen do you find yourselves cooking more?

Ruth: I'm cooking more and definitely enjoying it more as well. What I'm not doing anymore, is sarcastically saying..."in my next kitchen." After all these years, this IS my next kitchen and it's absolutely wonderful!

Jonas: While the entire project was a huge improvement, the kitchen is by far the centerpiece. We are delighted with the suggestion made by Joyce at Fleming Tile & Marble to use a piece of granite for the backsplash behind the stove. And speaking of Fleming, they



did a great job matching up the grain of the countertops. Their installation was real craftsmanship.

What kind of feedback have you received from your neighbors?

Ruth: They love it now but early on, that was in question.

Jonas: When the excavation was first started, a lot of dirt was being moved around and there was concern of just how big we intended to go with the addition. There was probably a good collective sigh of relief once the neighbors realized



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just how little we were adding on. After the project was completed, we had the neighbors over for a party and from the comments we received, they love it.

Bill: Prior to the start of any project, we'll send out a letter to the immediate neighbors informing them of the upcoming project and apologizing, in advance, for any mess or disruption. In the letter, I ask that they contact me personally should there be any concerns or problems. For this particular project, my only call was from a neighbor who recognized my name from an introduction 10 years earlier. As it turned out, we ended up doing a nice remodel job for them as well.

Knowing what you know now, would you do it over again?

Ruth: To end up with this, a home that we now absolutely love, the answer is definitely yes! And to think we were able to make it happen without leaving our neighborhood and our great neighbors is huge.

Jonas: Don't forget to mention the flashlight incident.

Ruth: Oh yes...here's another reason why we didn't want to leave this neighborhood. One evening during the construction phase while the power was out, we stopped in to check on things. Since the lights were not working, we roamed the dark house with our

flashlights. Within minutes, one of the neighbors called us on our cell phone to report what they thought were prowlers. Having great neighbors shouldn't be taken for granted.

Is there anything you would do differently?

Ruth: We've been asked that before and the answer is honestly no. Remember, we thought about this project for a really long time. Unlike just dreaming about it, we actually thought things out and with Bill's help, I think very thoroughly. By the time we were ready to go, we had so many things in mind that we wanted—and then we made sure that we got them.

Any regrets for not doing it sooner?

Ruth: I'm very philosophical about it. I mean, you do it when you can—when it's right for you. For us, there were things that had a higher priority at the time.

Jonas: Yes, like sending our sons to college.

Ruth: Friends have asked if the boys were upset that we did it after they left home? They were actually very happy for us and I don't think they felt at all deprived.

Bill: From my experience, it's such a typical time in life for couples to take on a project. They've raised the kids, educated them, got them out and to be independent, then they look back to home for their own personal enjoyment as well as providing a beautiful place to welcome the growing family.

Any advice for homeowners who are contemplating a project?

Ruth: Getting back to Sarah Suzanka's theme, I think it makes sense for a lot of people to think about how they can best use the




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space that they have. That they don't necessarily have to sell and move somewhere else if there's a lot of what they're living with that they like. That they can tweak things in ways that help them better utilize their space, enjoy it more, and perhaps create a home where they can age in place.

Bill: In many homes today, there is so much square footage that is under-utilized or misappropriated. This is especially true given that the way we live in our homes has changed over the last generation or two. Many of those formal,



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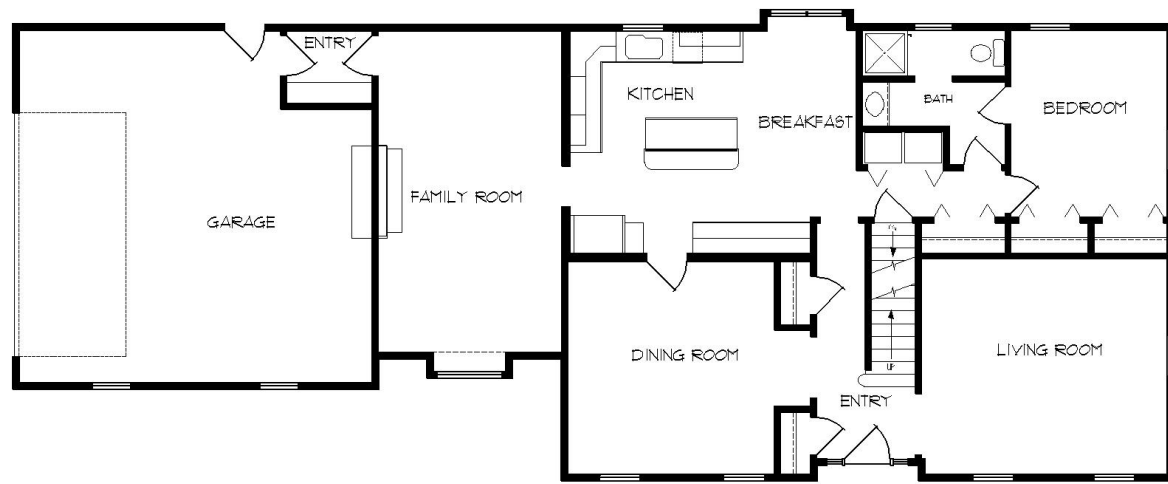
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Jonas: My advice would be to take your time and make sure you're ready to go. You might want it done sooner, but it's important to be at the right place in your lives and really know what you want. Then, find a team that can help you plan it thoughtfully and thoroughly. It's a big investment, you'll want to do it right the first time.

Any last thoughts or comments?

Jonas: Yes, I'd like to conclude by commenting on how happy we are with the way things turned out. Bill and his team at EG Stoltzfus was great to work with. We were particularly impressed with how responsive the EGS team was after the project was completed. With any project, there are always a few items that don't surface until after completion. We had a few minor issues, but the way they were handled by the EGS crew, it was obvious that they didn't consider them minor. The staff at EG Stoltzfus has been nothing but prompt, thorough, and professional.

Bill: Thank you. We take our customer service very seriously. It's always been the best marketing we can ever hope to do.

R&A

