The Davitts' sprawling, 1976, family home had multiple bedrooms that had to be used as awkward pass-throughs to get to bathrooms or other bedrooms. With the addition of two full bathrooms, and changing some of the layout, we were able to provide a design solution for this couple and their large extended family. The house now comfortably sleeps twenty people, with privacy, and nice breezes coming in off of the waterfront.

Before: No Privacy and Layout Dysfunction

Additions had been added to the home by a previous owner, without much care for aesthetics. Architecturally, the house was not pleasing compared to its beautiful setting on the water. The Davitts mostly used their garage for storage before their remodeling project. There was a cramped space over the garage where a long hallway provided the only access to what is now the game room. The home had many rooms without privacy that worked for the family when their children were younger, but they needed more space for grandkids. The couple has six grown children, and nine grandchildren.

Goals: Ease of Accommodating Multiple Families

• To have better, livable space. Even though we did not increase the footprint of the home, we increased the livable space.
• Improve the overall look of the house's exterior. Make updates.
• Expand the sleeping accommodations and make them more private.

Results: Seamless Living

When living on the waterfront, the back of the house—or waterfront side—is considered by neighbors to be the front of the house. We changed the roofline dramatically, and it is much more attractive than before the project. The new large screened-in porch is the Davitts' favorite part of their home now. The porch is their outdoor living room and dining room. It faces the water, which provides incredible views.
DESIGNING THE BIOPHILIC HOME
Remodeling to Bring Nature into Your Everyday Life

One new design trend has a deeper meaning and impact than many trends, ensuring its staying power. More designers and homeowners are “bringing the outdoors in.” Most people spend an excessive amount of time indoors. Many indoor environments have artificial light and recirculated air. In his article “What Is and Is Not Biophilic Design?” Stephen R. Kellert states that “We are just beginning to find that these environmentally impoverished habitats foster fatigue, symptoms of disease, and impaired performance.” Large windows, glass walls, skylights, inner-courtyards, and elaborate outdoor living spaces are just some of the solutions designers have incorporated into more and more home remodeling and building projects.

From Commercial Architecture to the Latest Trend in Homes
In the past, biophilic design has been implemented in commercial architecture. Exposure to nature improves focus and productivity. When you look at architecture historically, you can see how both interiors and exteriors mimic nature, from leaf patterns in the stone of a building, to vines in wallpaper: imitating nature is a long-standing design tradition. Recently, home builders, remodelers, and designers are using more biophilic techniques. Biophilic designs combat stale environments in the home. They are alive and place homeowners right up against a natural backdrop in a seamless way.

Experts say specific qualities make a design biophilic; for example, elements included should be alive and native to the area. If a home is in a suburban or wooded setting, seashells and driftwood may be pretty to look at, but they are neither alive, nor biophilic. Living nature incorporated into design can have a positive impact on stress levels, mood, and overall well-being. When homes incorporate components from their environment, it creates a cohesive look between the surrounding landscape and the home.

Varying Environment and Sensory Engagement
When we are in nature, temperature and light often shift, whereas indoors the lighting and temperature remain fairly constant. Abundant natural light, fresh air, and variables in both of these elements are healthy additions to your home. Living walls turn plant life into art pieces and filter the air, adding a biophilic touch. Fountains or indoor water features can replace having a view of water and also produce a nice auditory stimulus. Biophilic design maximizes all the senses, from the sounds of birdsong to the breezes from an open window.

When remodeling your home, incorporate glass walls, large windows, skylights, and even glass blocking. Consider transitional spaces, like the glass wall going onto a deck or outdoor living area. Having quality outdoor furnishings, and several potted plants indoors near the transitional space, pulls the two areas together. Seamless flow of the design from inside to the outside helps to blur the line between you and your natural environment. Bringing the outdoors in is not just a trend for beauty, but for peace of mind.

New Design Solutions for a Simple, Serene Kitchen Remodel

Can you look around your kitchen and name aspects of it that don’t function efficiently? Is countertop clutter always in the way when it’s time to prep? Are you shuffling around a collection of small appliances so you can wipe counters down?

Streamlined kitchen designs are appealing. It isn’t solely their futuristic, serene appearance, but how they incorporate solutions for maintenance and functionality. Homeowners of all ages are swapping out tired styles from the past for a fresh look and smooth workflow.
Your home’s siding is vital, not only for curb appeal, but for protecting your home’s walls and structure. Weather conditions can impact which type of siding you choose. Preventing damage caused by moisture, insects, or fire are important considerations as is proper maintenance of this investment in your home.

Here are some popular siding options for your consideration:

• **Vinyl** is easily installed and maintained, and tends to be the most versatile, economical siding. It comes in a variety of styles. It is moisture, insect, and fire resistant. Vinyl comes in various colors because it cannot be painted, but make sure the color you select is one you will not tire of in the next 20 years—the average lifespan of properly installed vinyl siding.

• **Wood** has a timeless appearance. While wood does not have the same resistance to moisture, insects, or fire that vinyl has, it is a beautiful siding option. Wood siding has good insulation properties. The color or stain can be changed, but the upkeep is costly due to the frequency of staining, painting, or sealing. Wood siding, when cared for properly, can last for the lifetime of your house.

• **Steel/Aluminum** siding is mold, fire, and pest resistant. It has a modern, sometimes industrial look. One drawback of metal siding is that it is one of the costlier options. If a chip forms in the metal, it must be sealed right away, or else it may rust—and it is hard to stop rust once it begins. Aluminum siding can form dents and does not provide the same type of noise insulation as wood or vinyl.

• **Fiber Cement or Wood Composite** siding both have a wood-like appearance and come in many styles and colors. They are more expensive than vinyl but less expensive than wood. Although composites can last up to 50 years, they require frequent painting after the first 10-15 years for upkeep. If the surface is damaged and not repaired or replaced, moisture can encroach on the siding’s core and cause damages.

• **Brick and stone** siding resists weather, insects, and fire, but is extremely expensive. Real brick and stone can last a lifetime and the look is very elevated. Veneers are less pricey options that are easier to install than true stone. With both real and faux stone and brick there is a risk moisture can be trapped behind the siding. Usually, expert installation prevents this possibility.

Wood, composites, and stone or brick are wonderful for mixing and matching siding on your home to create a more eclectic look. With vinyl, you can have many different styles of siding all made from one material. It depends on what kind of look you want your home to have, but it is a choice to plan carefully!

Upper cabinetry is becoming more obsolete as more homeowners choose lower cabinetry storage. Well-liked options include deep drawers, oversize islands, or floor-to-ceiling storage walls. Microwaves and refrigerators can be relegated to lower drawers, making them more reachable. Open shelving often displays attractive collections of objects. Range hoods are sometimes hidden, adding to the clean aesthetic. Some remodeled kitchens look more like living areas than kitchens. Skylights, large windows, and camouflaged lighting provide an airy, bright, and inviting atmosphere.

Monochromatic color palettes still hold appeal, but many homeowners are embracing bold colors, especially in cabinetry. Matte laminate, and wood veneer cabinets are gaining traction along with the use of metal. Cabinetry hardware is often left out altogether, for a clean, easy to maintain look. Appliance cabinets and “garages” are more popular than ever for stashing away all of those small countertop appliances that can hinder your working space. Customizable storage options in drawers and cabinets have no signs of losing ground as trends.
On the home’s exterior, we replaced the roof with Landmark architectural shingles in Colonial Slate. New windows and the addition of dormers over the garage created a stunning change, added character, and let in more natural light. The new double garage doors are Carriage House, in white, for a classic look. In the backyard, we installed aluminum spiral stairs leading up to the new roof top deck. The gorgeous blue siding is James Hardie, with a ColorPlus® finish, in Evening Blue.

Gone is the house’s previous dysfunctional layout: the new layout sleeps twenty people with comfort and privacy. We added two additional full bathrooms to the floorplan. The Davitts’ upstairs bathroom is elegant with walls in a neutral Silverstone Gray, highlighted with pops of white. The striking shower is tiled in Finesse, Bright White, with an accent strip done in Stone Décor Shadow tile. The spacious double vanity is from the Wolf Classic cabinet line, in York White, with a Caledonia granite countertop. Their master bath is painted a lovely shade of blue, called Flowering Breeze, and we used many of the same tiles and features as the gray bathroom.

The downstairs bathroom walls are Modern Coral. The floor is tiled with Classico Blanco tiles. The shower walls are done in Finesse, Bright White, tiles, while the shower floor is Hidden Treasure tile. Our clients selected a Wolf Classic vanity, in Saginaw Crimson, a warm color to compliment the coral walls. Giallo Fiesta granite was chosen for the countertops and the shower curb and bench.

The T.W. Ellis Family Difference

According to Mr. Davitt, one of the benefits his family experienced during their remodeling project with us, was the level of trust they had in our crew. Tim Ellis made some suggestions for significant changes to their architect’s original design. These changes made a positive impact on the finished product. Tim’s crew included his father, uncle, cousin, and a close friend. The Davitt family was living in the house for half of the project, and they were totally comfortable with the crew. They Davitts enjoyed their company and “they became a part of the family.”