

# Soothing BATHS

Creating a refuge from the stresses of daily life



by Chuck Cozette

Spa-like, stand-alone tubs and spacious and soothing showers are the focal points of current bath design, reflecting a shifting mindset where bathrooms — especially master baths — are increasingly considered to be spaces for relaxation, comfort and stress relief.

The stand-alone bathtub is a natural centerpiece of a spa-like bath, often with

prime placement near a window for natural light and a visual connection to the outdoors.

Expansive showers — often boasting colorful wall tiles — serve as another eye-catching bath focal point, especially when paired with a glass enclosure. Many newer showers also feature a bench or seat to encourage relaxation and zero- or low-threshold entries to provide aging-in-place accessibility.



Photos by Eric Houman courtesy of Drury Design

## FRESH & FUNCTIONAL

### HOMEOWNERS

Live in Glen Ellyn

### DESIGN

Alicia Saso, CKBD  
Drury Design in Glen Ellyn



shower with a bench; a freestanding tub with lumbar support; and ample storage and counter space. The homeowner also wanted to maintain an accessible view of the backyard.

### HOW THEY ACHIEVED IT

Among the challenges was to keep the bathroom footprint open while incorporating separate vanities, a large shower and a freestanding tub. After reviewing a number of different floor plan options, the Drury Design team decided to place the large Kohler Abrazo freestanding tub at a 45-degree angle to promote visual flow and to allow the family to walk up to it and still look out the window. An angled half-wall was created behind the tub to provide space for a plant, book or glass of wine.

To accommodate a larger shower without giving up bathroom floorspace, a shared wall with the primary bedroom was bumped out about four feet. That still did not allow quite enough room to fully enclose the toilet area, so it was effectively “hidden” in the corner next to a sink vanity. The space across from it was filled with a tall linen cabinet.

White tile on the floor and white painted walls keep this space light and bright while making the footprint feel wide and spacious. The natural light and numerous decorative light fixtures also brighten the space. The blue cabinetry was chosen to provide a spark of color and contrast. “We love the dark cabinet,” says the homeowner. “I tend to like bold colors, so for me, that was a nice choice — keeping it kind of serene, a little bit of a spa vibe. And it was really funny, because my husband surprisingly ended up getting involved in the design process. He was kind of like, ‘I want to put my stamp on the project.’ He ultimately picked out the tile for the shower area, which I think ended up tying in very nicely.”

### WHAT THEY WANTED

The existing primary bathroom was outdated and lacked functionality, so the Glen Ellyn homeowners brought in Drury Design to do a full remodel. Among the key design objectives for the new bath were a large





MASTER SUITE-NESS

**HOMEOWNERS**  
Live in Geneva

**DESIGN**  
Hogan Design & Construction in Geneva & Vara Design in Aurora



WHAT THEY WANTED

When the homeowners purchased their historic home in Geneva, there was not a primary bedroom with an on-suite. There were three bedrooms with two hall baths. The homeowners turned to Hogan Design & Construction in Geneva to reconfigure the upstairs to make room for a master bath.

HOW THEY ACHIEVED IT

By eliminating a hallway off the stairs, a large closet and one of the hall baths, Hogan Design created the room necessary for the suite. They then moved the plumbing for the bath to the portion of the home that was serving as the homeowner’s bedroom at the back of the house.

Once the construction portion of the project was done, the homeowners worked with Hogan’s partner designers at Vara Design in Aurora to create the spa retreat

they wanted, including a steam shower and soaker tub.

For other elements of the design, the homeowners found a lot of inspiration from interior designers on Instagram, specifically a designer named Jean Stoffer (see related feature on page 6.) They were amazed at how Vara was able to provide them with options that really hit on the look they were trying to achieve and that also worked within their budget.

The homeowners especially appreciated Hogan Design Project Manager Mike Martin’s consultative role and ability to explain what needed to be done in easily understandable terms. “Mike brought calm to our chaos,” they said.



ROOM WITH A VIEW

**HOMEOWNERS**  
Live in Burr Ridge

**DESIGN**  
Charles Vincent George Architects in Naperville

WHAT THEY WANTED

The homeowners were downsizing from a sizable home near downtown Hinsdale as their children were now out of college and starting their own lives. Their new residence in Burr Ridge was almost half the square footage of their original home and was intended to become their final home for “growing old in.”

In addition to designing for a future of aging in place, the client had two other priorities. First, they had lived in a highly detailed traditional home for the last few

decades and they wanted a fresh new look that was transitional in nature. They liked the traditional nature of historic architecture, but also greatly appreciated the clean lines of more contemporary designs. They wanted a home that did not discard historical architecture but, provided a fresh new look.

Secondly, the homeowners wanted to take full advantage of exterior views to the wide deep lot they had purchased. While their Hinsdale home had a good sized yard, it did not provide the kind of

expansive outdoor setting that their new lot offered. They wanted to take full advantage of the more country-like setting in their day-to-day living.

**HOW THEY ACHIEVED IT**

The home was designed with a first floor master suite to facilitate aging in place.

The master bath was designed with a feature window overlooking a koi pond and creek that already existed on the property. The adjoining master bedroom also had expansive views along with a walk out porch.

The bathroom has a traditional feel but with a lightness to the design detailing to give it a crisp updated feel. The tub niche with the full projected bay window is the focal point when entering the bath, while also allowing unobstructed views of the secluded backyard without sacrificing privacy.





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## MAXIMIZING SPACE IN STYLE

### HOMEOWNERS

Live in Naperville

### DESIGN

River Oak Cabinetry & Design in Plainfield

### WHAT THEY WANTED

The master bath had never been remodeled and reflected the design norms of the late 1980s when the home was built. It had a very small shower and a large whirlpool bath and the vanity, lighting and plumbing fixtures were outdated. The Naperville homeowners knew they needed a complete remodel. Their primary objectives were to create a much larger walk-in shower, to make the whole space more functional, to add some extra storage space and, if possible, to create more privacy around the commode.

### HOW THEY ACHIEVED IT

There were several design challenges that had to be addressed. “The space where the existing shower was plumbed was very small,” says Mike Rockouski, owner of River Oak Cabinetry & Design in Plainfield, brought in to handle the remodel. “Also, the toilet was positioned smack dab in the middle of the room.”

River Oak overcame these obstacles by reimagining the space and relocating the toilet to the original shower space. In addition to providing an increased level of privacy, it also opened up extra space for a new larger double vanity and a tower linen cabinet for more storage. Next, the

space where the old, unused whirlpool tub had been located was transformed into a large, walk-in shower.

“The updated shower — which has both standard and hand-held shower heads, a seating bench, and a functional built-in niche — is our favorite feature,” says the homeowner of the new bathroom.

The design process was a true partnership between the River Oak design team and the homeowners, with the latter providing an “inspiration photo” to show what they were looking for in terms of colors, materials and finishes.

This helped guide River Oak’s selection of “the earthy, wood-toned tile for the shower back wall that perfectly compliments the clean, modern lines of the rest of the shower and bathroom,” says Rockouski, adding, “We used tile for the base rather than milled baseboard, and that adds to the regal look of the space.”



The bathroom also utilizes a powered bidet toilet seat, which is becoming more and more popular.

Additionally, to address the homeowner’s desire that the bath accommodate the ability to “age in place,” River Oak framed in extra bracing to support safety grab bars in both the shower and toilet area.

The homeowner also especially liked that the walk-in shower is doorless, says Rockouski. “And in the interest of “future-proofing” the enclosure, we also made sure the opening was the size of a standard door so that if they change their mind at some point in the future, the process of adding a door would be very simple, quick, and most importantly, inexpensive.”

The homeowners are “extremely pleased with the design selections and the overall look that was created,” they say, adding, “We simply love the end result and will enjoy our new master bath for many years to come.” ■