



Quality Craftsmanship | Stowe, Vermont

the craftsman.

Spring, 2020

Transformations that exceed the vision



Open it up! This is what the owners wanted us to do, so we removed the half wall and post between the living and dining rooms. We turned the former three season porch into a vaulted ceiling family room and removed much of the living room ceiling to make it spatially dynamic and airy.

Embrace a house design that matches the owners' needs and desires and then build a home that exceeds that vision. Sisler Builders applies this methodology to all the homes they build, and to their renovation and remodeling projects, too. "It's what happens when a building team is experienced, knowledgeable, trustworthy, focused on quality, and puts their heart into whatever they are building," explains Steve Sisler, founder of Sisler Builders.

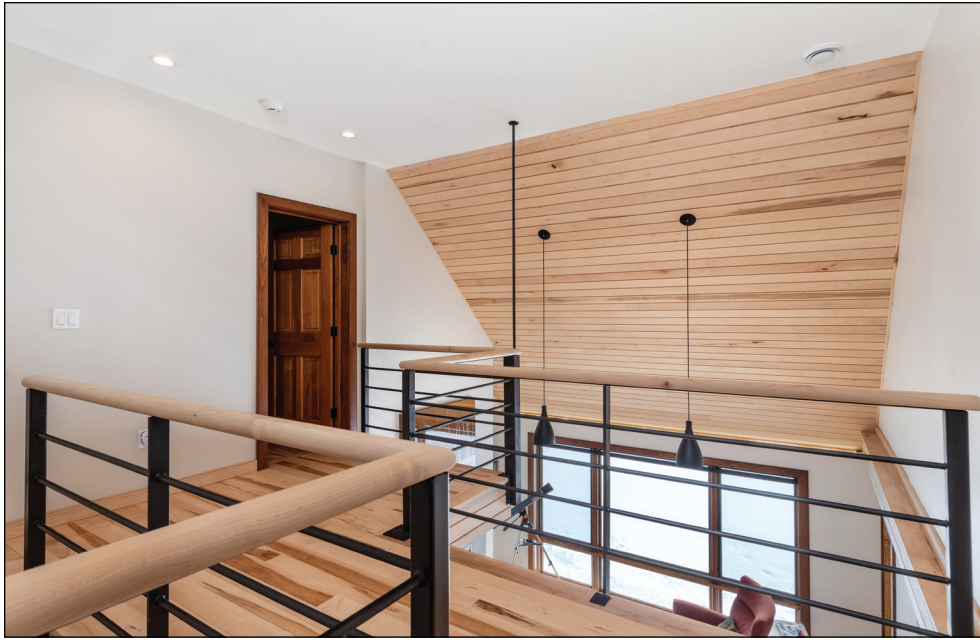
Here are two projects that exemplify the "exceed the vision" doctrine that has served Sisler Builders well for over 35 years. One is a whole-house renovation; the other, a major remodeling of several rooms and substantial energy reduction measures.

Tapped potential

We collaborated on a whole-house renovation for a young family who bought a dated property on a south-facing lot in Robinson Springs. They wanted a modern, energy efficient, low-maintenance, open floorplan home that would make full use of the existing space without going beyond the footprint.

Originally from Australia, currently living in Boston, the couple had come to Stowe so their teenage boys could learn to ski. "We liked the area and started looking for a house to buy," said Grace. "During our search, we saw a few Sisler Builder houses and were impressed with the craftsmanship. We chose them to renovate the house we bought, not only because we liked their work, but because we felt we could get along with Steve. Having a good rapport with our contractor is important to us. Renovating a home is personal and we wanted to be involved in the whole process."

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“They were receptive to my ideas and recommendations and we had a good collaboration throughout,” said Steve Sisler, whose suggestions included converting the three-season covered porch into an airy vaulted-ceiling family room; opening up the living room by removing much of the beamed flat ceiling, replacing the associated beams with a steel tension rod to support a catwalk; removing a half-wall divider and post between the living room and dining room; replacing a kitchen pass-through with a gorgeous marble countertop island; and converting the multi-story brick fireplace into a sleek, Vermont slate fireplace with a live-edge cherry mantle. These alterations, in conjunction with multiple window changes, contributed to the desired open feel, with living spaces subtly defined by ceiling height and materials.

The owners had a history of working with Cushman Design Group who designed the exterior, did interior conceptual plans, and managed the structural design work. Sisler Builders developed the detailed interior plans collaborating with the owners on materials choices and finish details.

The renovation continued well beyond the main living areas. The redesigned kitchen is fully open to the dining room, thanks to some creative structural work. The master suite was also completely reconfigured. Two upstairs bedrooms and the shared bath were upgraded. The catwalk received a transparent handrail system capped by a native maple rail and maple flooring. The previously unfinished basement was transformed into a light, multi-purpose area with new south-facing windows, a family room, laundry, office, full bath, and mechanical room.

“It was a modest, yet significant, project,” said Sisler. “We took a dated home that had potential and turned it into something special. It was built on a relationship of mutual trust. We find these types of projects particularly gratifying. Through teamwork and good collaborative ideas we tapped its potential.”



Clockwise from upper left: The catwalk with its transparent balustrade, maple flooring, and maple handrail, and the sloped living room ceiling, paneled with custom-milled maple, also used in the sun-room vaulted ceiling for continuity.

The opened up cathedral ceiling and modified fireplace treatment.

Before shot, showing the pass-through kitchen, brick fireplace, and larger flat ceiling in living room.

After shot, from the same vantage point, showing how open and connected the new kitchen is to the rest of the living spaces.

Repeat business remodel

Repeat business is the best business. By virtue of being asked by a former client to collaborate again, there was an implicit message that, from their perspective, the relationship was positive and worth continuing. We love receiving this message and work hard to earn it.

This remodeling project was for another couple from the Boston area that Sisler Builders had built a home for in 1992. They sold that home and left Stowe for a while, but as everyone who lives here knows, there's something about Stowe that's hard to resist.

The couple returned and began looking for a vacation home. This one caught their eye. Although a 2,800-foot addition had been added to the front of the house, they were still faced with older construction in the original space. They asked us to take a look, and all agreed it was a home in a location worth pursuing.

Sisler Builders encouraged the owners to hire an architect to integrate and detail the big-picture ideas within the footprint of the existing structure. They chose Lee Hunter whose insights further enhanced the design. The major mandates from the owners were single-level living with a master suite close to the kitchen, dining, and living area; separate offices for each; suites for their frequent guests; and a deep energy retrofit.

"We proposed converting the garage into the master suite. It was close to the kitchen and had incredible views to Mt. Mansfield," said Steve. "We framed an elevated floor system at the same level as the main floor, added a large sliding patio door and windows, and voila, a stunning master bedroom!"

The former sunken master bath and ancillary bump-out were removed, and a guest wing with two en suite bedrooms was streamlined. Each spouse got their own



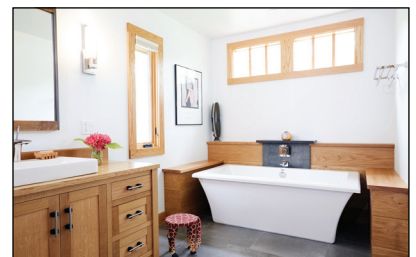
office, and the couple and their dog now enjoy a xc ski-in/ski-out mudroom that opens out to a fenced-in yard. Our custom woodworking division did a fair amount of the woodwork, including barn doors to the master suite and custom vanities in all bathrooms.

While the remodel was taking place, every effort was made to increase the level of insulation and reduce the level of air infiltration, the first step of the deep energy retrofit. We replaced the thirsty old oil boiler with a high-efficiency gas model as back-up heating. Air source heat pumps provide heating on all but the coolest nights, while providing summer cooling. A substantial solar array was installed on south facing roof planes. Now, a home that regularly had annual heating energy bills in excess of \$6,000, has heating and cooling costs in the \$2,000 range!

"We were relatively easy clients, comfortable being absentee homeowners," said the husband. "We visited a handful of times during the six-month remodel process and love the outcome. We are able to close off the back of the house when only two of us and our dog are here, and open it up for guests. The process was easy. There was no anxiety. Steve is trusted and easy-going and we felt comfortable the entire time. Sisler Builders completely exceeded our expectations, again!"



Our **custom woodworking department** plays an important role in renovation and remodel projects. These hand-crafted doors and vanities were created for the above home. Left: Repurposed garage doors add interest to an exterior elevation of the new master bedroom. Right: The owners favorite wood, white oak, was used for the vanity, tub surround, and window trim. A subtle contrast was achieved in the vanity drawer fronts and doors by using rift sawn for the stiles and rails and quarter sawn for the panels. Custom built sliding barn door to the master suite, using the same combination of rift and quarter sawn white oak. The bookcase was repurposed from the former mudroom, with some modifications.





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In the News

Frontline Housing Needed—Some of our clients have generously offered their unoccupied second homes to frontline Covid-19 workers. For example, a Stowe dentist is seeing emergency patients and can't risk living at home with her children. Now she is staying in one of our clients homes, keeping her loved ones safe while she helps others. If you have an unoccupied second home you are willing to share, please let us know. We are neighbors helping neighbors!

Hockey Winners!—Just before the Covid-19 crisis shutdown, the Harwood Union boys hockey team won the Division 2 state title. Our very own site facilitator Shawn Thompson is the assistant coach for this amazing team. The last time the Highlanders won the state title was way back in 2005, when Shawn and Nick Sisler were on the team. Go Highlanders!

Building Conference—Every year Efficiency Vermont presents the Better Building by Design Conference in Burlington, Vt. This year six Sisler Builders employees attended: Mike D'Muhala, Shawn Thompson, Chuck Hough, Bryan Kelley, Luke Sisler, and Steve Sisler. The conference hosted leaders from across the construction

industry, who spoke on a wide range of topics, such as how physics can help you choose the right membrane for water management, making existing homes healthy, and, at the extreme end of the spectrum, how to design buildings to make them a carbon sink.

The general focus of the conference was how the industry can build homes for the future—homes that last longer, perform better, and minimize their carbon footprint—keeping in mind building science and air-tight homes have been around for over 30 years. Some presentations educated the attendees on what has, and hasn't, worked, based on experience.

The conference also featured over 50 exhibitors, providing an opportunity to learn about new products. As new technology comes online and more data is available, we can learn how past designs have performed. More than ever, it's important to know what options are available to us, so we can educate our clients and provide a healthy home to be enjoyed for years to come.

