

Twice transformed



One home's journey with two different owners

Photos: Kate Carter

By Kate Carter

Often, a home well suited for one family might need changes to better suit it for another family. For example, Sisler Builders renovated this house for new owners in 2019. When they decided to return to Australia, they put the house on the market. The next owners had specific requirements for their home, and seeing the work Sisler Builders had already done, asked them to do a second round of renovations tailored to their needs.

Part 1

The first mission was a whole-house renovation for a young family from Australia, then living in Boston. They had been coming to Stowe in winters so their teenage boys could learn to ski. They liked the town and started looking for a house to buy. 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.

During their search, they encountered houses Sisler Builders had either built or renovated and were impressed with the craftsmanship. They met with owner Steve Sisler, who suggested converting the three-season covered porch into an airy, semi-octagonal 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 the second-floor catwalk; removing a half-wall divider and post between the living and dining rooms; replacing a kitchen pass-through with a gorgeous marble waterfall countertop kitchen island; and converting the multi-story brick fireplace into a sleek, Vermont slate-clad fireplace with a live edge cherry mantle and slate hearth.

Sisler collaborated with architect Chad Forcier of the Cushman Design Group to design the renovation and structural work on the catwalk. "The entire house needed a facelift. It was not a big home, so there wasn't

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Before Part 1

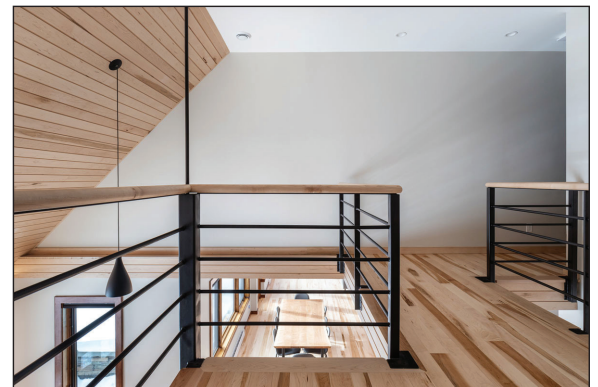


After Part 2

a lot of space to work with to improve flow,” Forcier said. “We determined which components were worth salvaging and which were beyond use. The kitchen was very closed off, and we successfully transformed it into a bright, airy, more accessible space. We also agreed that removing a post that supported a catwalk would create better flow in the living area.” Sisler and Forcier were able to do that by installing a tension member support rod from the roof framing. The catwalk also received a transparent steel handrail system capped by a native maple guard rail. They also installed maple flooring on the catwalk and in the bedrooms.

The master suite, two second-floor bedrooms, and a shared bath were also renovated. They transformed the previously unfinished basement into a light, multipurpose area with new south-facing windows, a family room, laundry, office, full bath, and mechanical room with new mechanical systems.

“It was a modest, yet significant, project,” said Sisler. “We took a dated home that had potential and turned it into something special.”



The kitchen was upgraded from a tired and dated layout to an open floorplan with custom cabinetry by Sisler Builders' woodworking team. The old brick fireplace was updated with Vermont slate and a live edge cherry mantle and slate hearth. Upstairs, the catwalk is suspended from the ceiling by tension members. Left, the entire living area was opened up by removing a half wall between the dining room and living room and also by removing a post that supported the catwalk and was no longer needed.

Part 2

The Covid pandemic made the Aussie homeowners realize the importance of being close to family. They moved back to their native Australia, and sold their beloved Stowe home. The new owners were captivated by the look of the home, but wanted more. They were impressed with Sisler Builders' renovation, so they once again hired them to make the changes they desired. They also brought in local architect Lee Hunter, who, along with Steve Sisler, came up with a plan to expand the home while maintaining a consistent look and feel.

"They wanted to tailor the house to their own family's situation, with more room for their extended family, a larger living room, a covered walkway for safer navigation from garage to house, more office space, and an apartment in the basement," Sisler said.

More renovations included bumping out the house on one side to create a new primary suite. To enlarge the living room, they added an addition that mimicked the octagonal vaulted-ceiling family room. Sisler Builders' woodworking team took the kitchen to a whole other level by fabricating kitchen cabinets that matched the existing ones they had crafted for the previous owners.

Other upgrades included a large office with cherry-veneered cabinets custom-built by the Sisler Builders' custom woodworkers, a covered walkway from the garage to a new mudroom, and a guest suite with its own kitchen and gym space. Finally, Sisler Builders installed a patio outside the addition, which has freshly landscaped perennial beds and a newly enlarged and graded back lawn where the grandkids play.



Clockwise: Part 1 living room upgrade and Part 2 living room bump-out addition with semi-octagonal configuration. Part 2 enlarged office space leading to primary bedroom addition, also with semi-octagonal layout. Part 2 new covered walkway installation from the garage to the house. Photos by Kate Carter.



Company News

From job sites to soccer fields

Who says project management is limited to job sites? This season, Sisler Builders team members are showing off their skills on the soccer field—mentoring young athletes and bringing their signature teamwork to Waterbury's youth league.

Project managers Bryan Kelley and Nate Lewis, along with pre-construction and finance manager Blake Cote, are each stepping up to coach and inspire the next generation of soccer stars. A recent highlight featured a friendly face-off: Team Grey, led by Nate, versus Team Black, co-led by Blake and Bryan. No official score was kept, but judging by the laughter, high-fives, and sideline cheers, everyone walked away a winner.

Whether it's coordinating builds or coaching drills, our team knows how to bring heart, hustle, and a whole lot of fun.

— Amelia McConnell, Business Manager





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Ask the craftsmen.

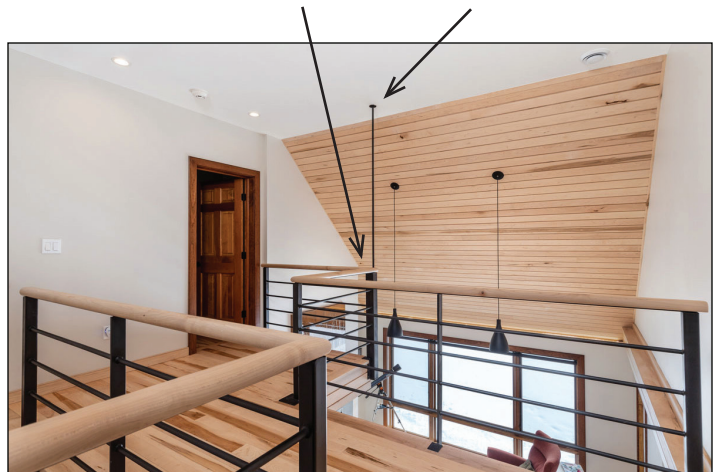
What is a tension member?

Have you ever tried pushing something with a rope? Hopefully not, but you can use a rope to pull many things. This is the idea behind the tension member, a structural member that does not push, but pulls. When building, there are circumstances where it's better to use tension rather than compression. Then there are times when tension members are structurally required. Examples of these are the collar tie of a timber truss, or a hanging deck supported by a chain from above.

In the project featured in this newsletter, we achieved an open floor plan with a tension member that supports the catwalk from the roof framing above it. We were able to make this design suggestion because we understand the dynamics of the different framing members and were creative with how they were deployed.

— Luke Sisler, COO

This image that goes with the cover story shows a tension member attached to the ceiling and the corner of the catwalk, allowing the removal of a supporting post below.



*Send your building question to
Ask@SislerBuilders.com.
We'll answer it in our next newsletter.*

