

Warm and welcoming renovation



Kate Carter

By Kate Carter

Building lots in Stowe have become increasingly scarce in recent years. According to the Town of Stowe Housing Needs Assessment, municipal water and sewer access is largely limited to designated growth centers and the Mountain Road corridor. Building outside these areas can require complex soil testing for private septic systems, while much of the remaining undeveloped land is challenged by steep slopes or exposed ledge that can make construction difficult. Add to that a housing stock dominated by second homes and vacation properties, opportunities for new construction are increasingly limited.

Sisler Builders recognized this trend and is placing greater emphasis on renovations of existing homes.

“We like the idea of taking older, dated homes that

already have infrastructure in place, and transforming them into more modern, aesthetically pleasing residences,” said Steve Sisler. “Many of these homes are also on beautiful, privately situated lots with dynamic views.”

One recent Sisler Builders project illustrates just how dramatic that transformation can be. The home changed hands four years ago, and while the new owners fell in love with the setting and views, the house itself had a cold, industrial feel. They turned to Sisler Builders to make it warmer and more welcoming, beginning with the main entry and extending into the kitchen, living spaces and primary bedroom suite. The project also included modifications to the lower level and bathrooms to better suit the owners’ needs.

“We completely revamped the front entry to address

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Before and after photos showing the main entry revisions and the kitchen's four-foot bump-out.

leakage problems and make it more welcoming,” Sisler said. “At the same time, we bumped out the adjacent kitchen four feet to create the additional space the owners needed.”

“The kitchen had beautiful elements, but it wasn’t a chef’s kitchen,” the owner said. “We wanted a space that would function well with several people cooking at the same time. We removed the sink from the island and extended the counters, windows, and cabinetry into the new bump-out.”

The great room presented a different challenge. Its soaring cathedral ceiling and expansive windows were spectacular during the day, framing ski trails in the distance and a pond in the foreground. At night, however, the room could feel cavernous.

The original dining area had occupied the part of the house with the best views of Mount Mansfield, so the team reimagined it as the great room. Sisler Builders added timber trusses and warm uplighting, bringing architectural interest and a more intimate feeling to the soaring space.

“We also constructed new posts and timbers that went through an elaborate five-step staining process,” Sisler said. The resulting finish gives the wood unusual depth and character, while adding warmth and texture throughout the room.

The new dining area gained definition as well. Sisler Builders extended a balcony from the second-floor family room, creating a ceiling over the dining space while opening the upper level to the great room below. From the balcony, the owners can enjoy the same sweeping



The kitchen renovation included a much larger island, removal of the island sink, more cabinetry, the four-foot bump-out with windows overlooking the front yard, and a coffee bar.

An elaborate five-step staining process applied to timbers resulted in an accentuated texture.

views of Mount Mansfield in the distance..

Other renovations included reconfiguring the entrance to the primary bedroom suite to give it a greater sense of privacy. Originally, the bedroom was accessed directly from the great room, an arrangement that felt awkward and exposed. Sisler Builders also suggested removing an underused desk and office area, allowing the bedroom to become larger and more comfortable.

For the owners, the renovation accomplished something more important than simply updating the house. It changed the way the home feels. The owners already loved where they lived; Sisler Builders helped them love how they lived there.

“We met our goal of making the living spaces warmer and more to our liking,” the owner said. “It’s now a place where family and friends can gather and feel at ease.”



Left: The second-floor family room was extended out over the main living space and has the same view from a different perspective.

Above: New posts and timbers add architectural interest and warmth to the cathedral ceiling.

Below: the entry renovations as seen from the inside of the upper level. Photos by Kate Carter.

Company News

Sisler Builders is doing another type of building. This one’s about building relationships with technology centers in Barre and Hyde Park. They offer career-focused programs, where students build technical skills, earn industry credentials, and gain college credits. Through the centers’ co-op programs, students can intern with local organizations during their senior year of high school.

“We are trying to get local kids involved in the trades and train the next generation of carpenters,” said Mike D’Muhala, Sisler Builders’ energy division technical manager.

Blair Whitney and Kerson Van Leuven, both graduates of the Green Mountain Technology & Career Center in Hyde Park, went through the program while in high school and now work full time in Sisler Builders’ energy division. Everyone is looking forward to welcoming more student interns in the company’s custom homes and woodworking divisions as well.

In other news, Paula Statskey was hired as energy division manager. With a background in civil engineering from UVM and a passion for reducing environmental impact, she was a shoe-in for the position. Statskey's previous work in roof replacements sparked an interest in the science of how a whole house works



and the best ways to insulate a home. “I wanted something I could commit to and care about. This was exactly the type of job I was looking for,” she said. Statskey lives in Essex with her partner and in her spare time she snowboards, works on upgrades to her house and paints illustrations.



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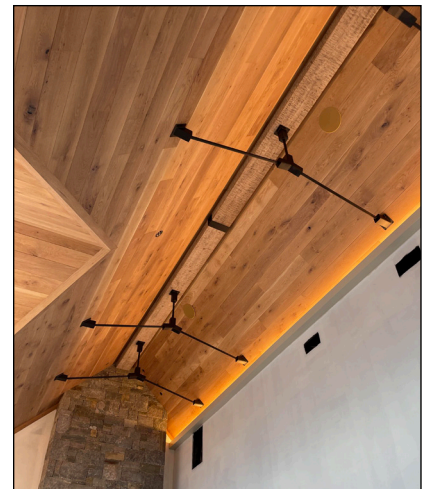
How do you light a cathedral ceiling?

Cathedral ceilings make a dramatic statement during the day, but at night, all that soaring space can suddenly feel a little like a bat cave. The right lighting can change that completely. Upward, indirect lighting draws the eye to the ceiling itself, highlighting beautiful beams, woodwork, and architectural details that might otherwise disappear after dark.

It takes some planning, whether during new construction or a renovation. A typical installation involves a low-voltage driver tucked discreetly into a cabinet, utility space, or even on top of a beam. LED strip lighting can then be mounted along the upper side of beams—much like under-cabinet lighting, only aimed toward the ceiling.

The effect is subtle but striking. Instead of harsh overhead light, the ceiling reflects a warm, soft glow back into the room, adding depth, dimension, and atmosphere. Floor and table lamps can provide the task lighting needed for reading, entertaining, and everyday life, while overhead, the cathedral ceiling becomes a feature all its own.

— Luke Sisler, COO



Upward lighting hidden behind beams warms the space and draws the viewers' eyes to the ceiling's architectural structure.

