

Bathroom for a Dual Master Suite

by Elaine E. Laney

With the design and construction drawings of their new home substantially complete, some recent clients of mine still wanted to explore further design options for the bathroom and laundry off their dual master suite. Looking ahead to a time when wheelchair access might be a necessity, they wanted the design to accommodate unhindered access from the outset.

Improving Access

While the original plan for the approximately 13- by 14-foot bathroom was attractive and reasonably functional, we agreed that the approach to the shower was somewhat restrictive in width and required an irksome turn to negotiate. The adjacent rooms were satisfactory as designed (with the exception of the tightly configured powder room), and the location of the whirlpool tub had to remain below the window facing an ornamental garden, so I was somewhat limited in my options for reconfiguration (see Figure 1). However, as I worked through the plans, a few things began to make sense. First, I was given the green light to separate the washer and dryer (stacked units are a possibility, but don't allow access to a person seated in a wheelchair). Second, we determined that the generously-sized closet, designed for linens and supply storage, could be adequately replaced by cabinets placed above the appliances and the toilet. Admittedly, wall-mounted cabinets thwart use by wheelchair-bound persons, but the owners decided in favor of this less than perfect trade-off.

Returning to the drawing board, I relocated the washer and dryer to

adjacent walls; the dryer and some cabinet storage would replace the storage closet, and the washing machine took over the toilet enclosure at one end of the whirlpool. The relocated toilet would share a semi-private enclosure with the shower, accessed through a

sliding pocket door. By shifting the toilet's location closer to one of the bedroom suite's entrances than the laundry enclosure had been, I was able to borrow a little space from the shower to recess the powder room's toilet. By shifting the toilet back 12 inches, the

Original Design

Restricted Shower Access and Generous Storage

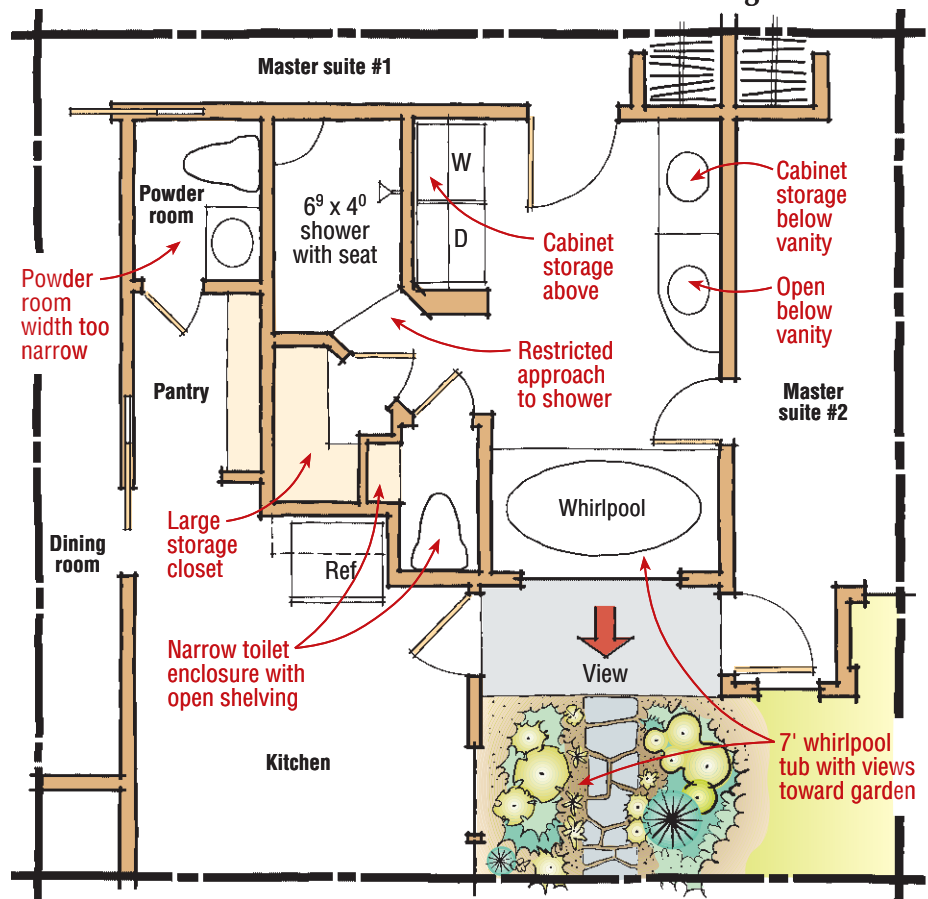


Figure 1. Although pleased with the general plan, the clients wanted the 13x14 master bathroom layout to anticipate future wheelchair access. Adjacent rooms and a tub with a garden view prohibited expansion, so the author was limited to reconfiguring the interior space. A too-tight powder room also needed attention.

Revised Plan

Shower/Toilet Room and Divided Storage

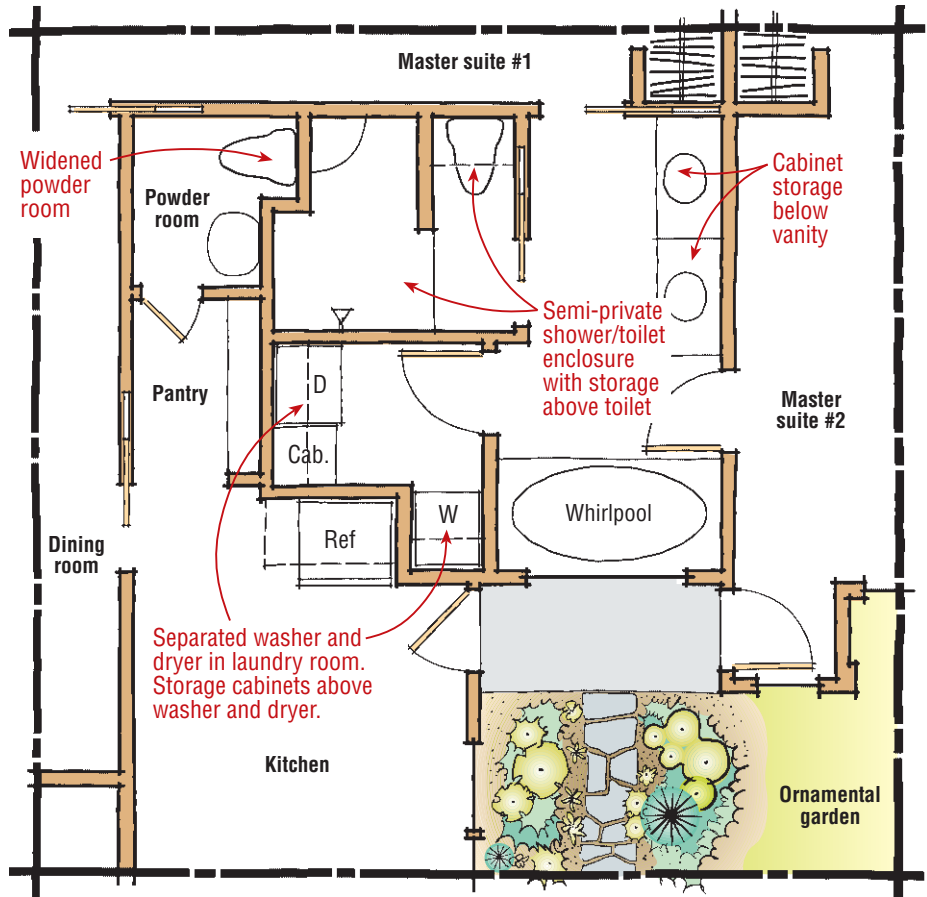


Figure 2. Breaking up the washer-dryer combo, trading the storage closet for cabinets, and relocating the toilet straightens the path to the shower. A jog in the wall improves the feel of the powder room, but doesn't leave enough space for a wheelchair to turn around in the shower. Access to the toilet enclosure is still awkward and too tight.

feeling of space in the powder room was much improved (Figure 2).

Still Too Tight

Although on the right track, the plan still didn't quite work. We'd taken the kink out of the approach to the shower, but not the corridorlike feeling. And, inside the shower, the nominal 4-foot by 6-foot-9-inch space wasn't enough for a wheelchair to turn around in. The minimum space requirement must accommodate a 5-foot-diameter circle. The toilet's placement would also require some deft maneuvering to be accessible from a chair.

Final plan. The owners felt no need to conceal the appliances, or add an extra step to their access, so rather than

lavish space on a separate laundry room, I erased the walls and moved the dryer location hard into the corner. Swapping its position with the washing machine made right-handed load transfer into the dryer easier.

I designed a large shower stall — with enough space to turn around in a wheelchair — between the washing machine and the newly made jog in the powder room wall, conveniently concealing the awkward-looking corner. For roll-in accessibility, we used a shower base with no curb. Using glass block to form one wall kept the shower enclosure from feeling too small, and added some pizzazz to the design.

Roomier stall. The toilet enclosure in the first plan was barely the allowed

Final Plan

Wheelchair Accessible Dual Master Suite

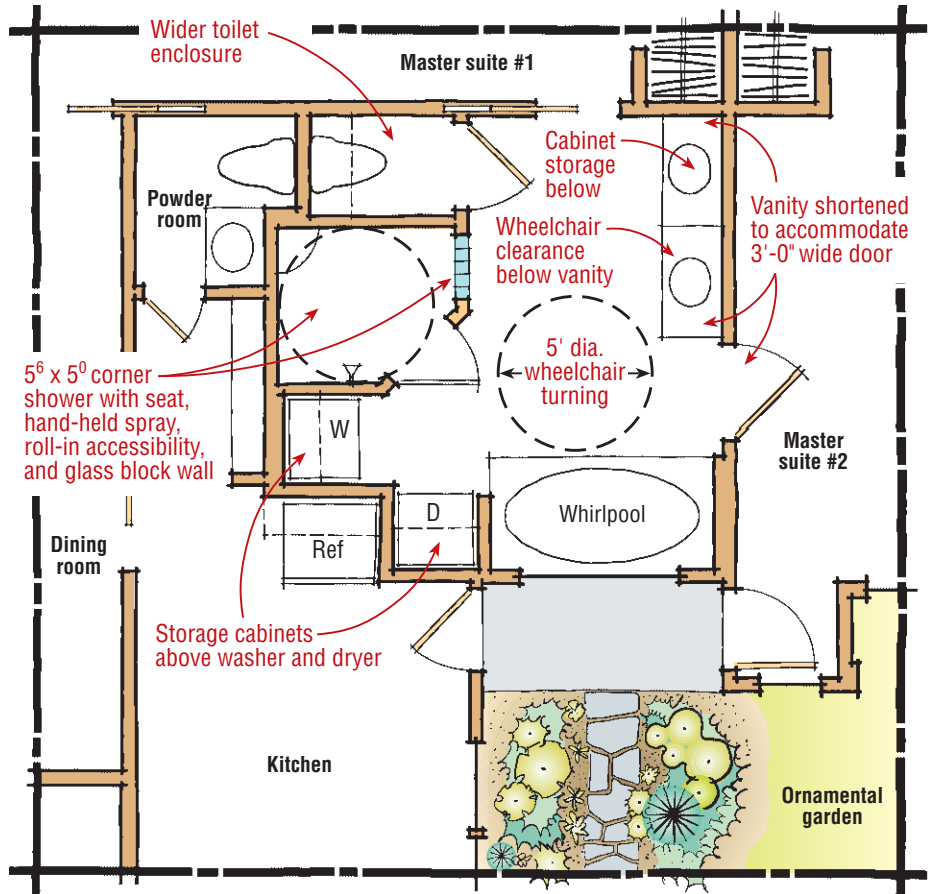


Figure 3. By abandoning the idea of a laundry enclosure, enough space is freed up for a shower with a 60-inch turning radius and direct roll-in entry. Left exposed, the appliances are unobtrusive in the final design. A wider stall and no corner to negotiate make the toilet more accessible. Narrow suite entries are increased to 3 feet wide. Outswinging and sliding doors don't conflict with access to the bathroom fixtures.

minimum of 30 inches wide; in the final plan, there was enough space remaining for an enclosure with 38 inches of interior space, and no corners to negotiate. Installing two toilets back-to-back had the added benefit of simplifying the plumbing rough-in.

Accessible details. The double-lav vanity included cabinet storage under one basin, while the other basin was suspended in a cantilevered top to allow a wheelchair to pull up close for sink use.

Grab bars are essential in an accessible bath — in fact, they're a good idea in any bathroom. While most of the grab bars would remain only an even-

tuality in this design, I made sure that solid 2x blocking was installed in the framing for secure, code-compliant anchoring able to support a 250-pound load.

The final item to address, unhindered access to the bathroom, was the width and the swing of the new doors. I increased the openings from 2-foot-6-inches wide to 3 feet wide, and specified that the doors either swing out from the bathroom or become pocket doors (Figure 3).



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