



**Remodeling Your
Holmes Run Acres House:
Remaining Faithful to the
Original Design**

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Introduction

The architects and builders who built Holmes Run Acres had a vision of what they wanted to create more than fifty years ago in what was then a far suburb of Washington, D.C. That vision included leaving the land as undisturbed as possible, designing houses that were open to their natural surroundings, and building them in modular style so that they could be easily adapted and enlarged. Almost miraculously, this vision has survived through five decades of turmoil and change around us, leaving HRA a green, cohesive, and peaceful oasis of special homes and people.

Much of the vitality of HRA comes from the desire of families to remain here in this oasis, remodeling and expanding their houses to fit their needs rather than buying elsewhere. The board of the HRA Civic Association commissioned this booklet in attempt to help those who want to stay to answer the question: How can I remodel while remaining faithful to the spirit of what the original architects and builders intended? The booklet tries to:

- Articulate what HRA's developers were trying to accomplish and how, architecturally, they approached their task.
- Provide practical guidelines concerning how to remodel an Acres house so that it blends with the original architecture and the rest of the community.

This booklet was created under the auspices of the Architectural Guidelines Committee of the HRACA, whose members were Arvydas Barzdukas (AIA), Larry Barton (AIA), Perry Burgess, Dee David, Keith Gardiner (chair), and Catherine Shaw. Arvydas and Catherine were the principal drafters, with major contributions from the others. The chapter, "HRA Builders And The Differences Among Our Houses," was written by John Purvis and appeared originally in a slightly different form in the *Holmes Runner*. We also wish to thank Wade Herron, who consulted on the chapter, "Getting On With Your Project," Matt Langley, who assisted with formatting and graphics for this booklet, and Haleh Peterson, our wordprocessor.

Most of the people who buy in HRA probably have some notion, even if not fully conscious, of why the houses here attract them. We hope this publication draws out those features, making it easier to remodel in a way that protects the specialness of what we have for at least another five decades.

Keith Gardiner, editor



The spirit of the house

Arvydas Barzdukas

As former Holmes Runners, architects Jim Freehof and George Lawson say in their article in the first edition of *HRA: A Story of a Community*, the spirit of a HRA house is easier to sense than to express in words.

The strongest features:

Careful siting

In laying out the HRA subdivision, rather than denuding the countryside of all trees for the most efficient street layout, the architects and the developers carefully planned the streets to respect the natural contours of the land. They also developed three basic models, each suited to the various slopes of the lots: a one level house and two, two-story houses, one designed to be built into an up-sloping lot and the other for a down-sloping lot. Additional visual variety was obtained by offering optional carports for the one-level houses and garages for some of the two-level homes.

Except for the stairs, the upper level of the two-story home reflected the plan of the single-story house. Although minor variations were made in the floor plans from their inception, the houses were proportioned to the available size of the lots, and were carefully and individually placed with great respect for the terrain and, when possible, major existing trees, orientation to the sun, and the view. Several of the cul-de-sac streets were planned as circles, with planting and major trees left in the middle as mini-parks to provide a spacious view and visual relief from a large area of asphalt.

Privacy concerns

Compared with other contemporary developments, Holmes Run Acres offered tremendous openness and great exterior spaces between houses, without one house violating or intruding into the privacy of another. Although the lots averaged only a quarter of an acre in size, the houses were individually positioned, with varying setbacks from the street to provide for and respect each home's privacy. This avoided the straight-line alignment of house fronts with the street, as would have been done in a more traditional subdivision, and created a much more open and varied streetscape.

Modular construction

The key element of the house design was its modular construction, honestly exposing all the main structural elements:

- posts along the exterior walls supporting doubled roof rafters bolted in the middle to matching 2"X12" wood "gussets"
- exposed 2"X6" naturally-stained tongue-and groove fir decking that spanned between the rafters
- walls that were either glass—a combination of fixed panes and aluminum sliders—or solid panels between the supporting posts, with varied kinds of natural wood siding on the exterior. To provide privacy, the bedroom end wall had only small sliding aluminum windows for ventilation.
- A brick fireplace element, in some cases incorporating a storage closet, both visually and structurally anchored the house to the ground and provided lateral stability. The wall at this end of the house had more glass, and later, many of these glazed opening were successfully used for access to the exterior patios, decks, or for expanding the originally small dining area. The lower level walls of the two-level

houses were brick (with concrete block backup), matching the fireplace wall.

The engineering and construction of these homes was nothing short of perfect, with no fluff, with simple trim and casing of the openings, and devoid any non-functional stylistic add-ons. What you saw was what you got.

Open floor plan

The basic open plan offered much visual space and flexibility without the need for large floor areas. Most interior walls were non-structural, and therefore, could be easily moved to create new spaces or expand existing ones. In fact, the original one-story house provided a movable “closet/storage wall” that could be positioned to create a study space or even another small bedroom

The strong element of modular construction, while providing considerable structural flexibility, at the same time dictates respect for the visual order of the original house.

off the living area. The kitchens in the original plan were small and the bathrooms were basic, although some were ingeniously designed with a “shared” basin in a separate alcove so that they could serve as both a bath and a “powder” room. The kitchens and bathrooms were the first features in HRA houses to become obsolete, and most owners have been able to creatively remodel and update them.

Making “in the spirit” changes

As Jim Freehof and George Lawson have observed, numerous changes to the houses over the years attest to the enduring success of the original design, in many instances improving individual homes and creating more housing variety. The outdoor “livability” of the homes often has been greatly enhanced by the addition of nicely screened patios, terraces, decks, and investment in vastly improved landscaping.

Nonetheless, the “integrated spirit” of the Holmes Run Acres house presents a real challenge when planning alterations, renovations, and additions. The strong element of modular construction, while

providing considerable structural flexibility, at the same time dictates respect for the visual order of the original house. This requires thoughtful integration and balance of the “solids”(walls) and the “voids” (the glazed openings, windows, and wall recesses), the shapes and slopes of the roof, and the layout of the floor plan. Current energy conservation codes make it even more difficult to maintain the original open, transparent design of the houses, demanding creative solutions in order to retain the “honesty” of the original architecture.

The basic “bare bones” finish of the interior also requires competent and skillful workmanship, because very little inside the home can be hidden by wide trim, wall coverings, and other “disguises” available in a more traditional construction.

In bringing these homes up-to-date, the spirit of the HRA house calls for restoration and renovation, with sensitive planning, careful selection of materials and finishes, and real attention to understanding and accepting the inherent limitations of the Acres architectural heritage. There will always be a temptation to demolish and replace the existing architecture with contemporary, perhaps fashionable, ideas and elements. But doing so risks violating the spirit of the extraordinary houses that have been passed down to us.

I cannot say this any better than to quote from a 1963 article by former Holmes Runner, architect Juris “George” Jansons (in whose firm I worked as an associate for several years in the mid-1960s): “These are distinctive houses. Much thought, hard work, understanding and high-caliber design talent went into designing our community, our houses... Let us add or alter if we must, but only with understanding and restraint.”



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HRA Builders And The Differences Among Our Houses

John Purvis

A Tract Project

In about early 1950, Luria Brothers Builders and Developers began the "tract" project that became known as Holmes Run Acres. Luria Brothers, who are survived today by either sons or grandsons under the name of Jade Builders, delivered its first Holmes Run Acres products in 1951. They offered the public a unique opportunity to own a contemporary style home modeled after the California Ranch style popularized on the west coast. The interior was hallmarked by the open wood beamed cathedral ceilings and huge expanses of glass found throughout the main or upper floors, along with oak hardwood floors in the two-story models, plus an unusual four-foot wide door leading out from the living room or lower level foyer. In addition, the houses featured gas utilities for heat, hot water, and cooking. This community was a radical departure from the mainstream architecture found on the east coast. Coupled with a location then considered to be "in the country," the builders had what most people would have considered a real uphill struggle to compete with other housing developments. But the product proved very attractive to buyers, and Luria Brothers was off and running.

Luria Brothers Houses

Of the 365 houses that make up the community, approximately half were built by Luria Brothers. They offered two basic models. The first was an 864 square foot slab rambler that was neatly placed on quarter-acre lots. The siting of this model provided for, in most cases, a carport that appeared either as an L-shaped protrusion to the front or an angular extension to the side of the home. The interior of each of these models was the same. The floor plan allowed for two bedrooms, one bath, kitchen, living room with huge brick walled fireplace, small dining or entry area, plus a partial partition wall that divided a portion of the living room area into a den area or dining area. The wood beam cathedral ceilings and large expanses of glass allowed for a living space with a more spacious feel than the otherwise small square footage actually provided. Over the years, especially during the Baby Boomer era, the partition area has often been permanently walled into a third bedroom. Since they were first built, the Luria single-story model

has grown in size with major modifications and additions, including the most popular and economical – enclosing the carport into finished living space.

The second model offered by Luria was a two-level version of the slab model, comprising 1728 square feet, also sited on quarter-acre lots. This house appeared as either a rambler with a daylight basement, if the lot sloped downward from the street, or as a bi-level if the lot was level or sloped upward from the street. In either case, the house featured finished living space on both levels, with an interior staircase connecting the two. There were two brick fireplaces, one in the living room and the other in the lower level family/recreation room. Where the topography allowed and the unit was two stories facing the street, the buyer could select a version that offered a built-in one car garage on the ground level, along with the entrance foyer, family/recreation room, laundry/utility room, and a bath (either half or full).

Over the years, the interior changes to the two-level model included enclosing carports and removing the walls of the third bedroom on the top level, creating a walk-around staircase in the living room, and new open space for dining or lounging.

It is my understanding that the original owners had the choice of either a half or full bath on the ground level. I know of at least one unit where no bath was found on the ground level. The upper floor plan for the garage model offered either three finished bedrooms, smaller living room, dining area, kitchen, and full bath with tub and built-in shower; or a version with the same arrangement but with only two bedrooms, thus making the living room larger and the “master” bedroom slightly larger.

If the buyer opted not to get the garage version but had the same two stories facing the street, then a finished bedroom in the front and an unfinished smaller room to the rear accessed from the finished room took the place of the garage. Where the topography

provided for a rambler model with only one level facing the street, the lower level space was the same as the plan with no garage, described above, but with the same two choices of floor plans: either the three bedroom or the two bedroom top floor. In a few instances, the topography allowed for the house to be sited on the lot so that both the front and rear of the home faced a street, as in the case of a corner lot. In a few cases where the house was perpendicular to a street, the front and rear of the home face the sidelines of the property (talk about confusion on front doors!). Also, in rare instances, the two-level model had a carport attached, as was found on the slab model.

Over the years, the interior changes to the two-level model included enclosing carports and removing the walls of the third bedroom on the top level, creating a walk-around staircase in the living room, and new open space for dining or lounging. I have also seen remodels in which only the walls separating the third bedroom from the “master” bedroom were removed, thus creating an even larger master. Again, loads of additions and modifications are found in the Luria two-level models, just as in the slab model. The style and construction of Luria’s houses begged for expansion.

Luria’s building started on Holmes Run Drive and continued

Gaddy decided to continue the same architecture, with open wood beamed cathedral ceilings, two brick walled fireplaces, large expanses of glass, and the oversized four-foot door Luria had introduced.

through to the intersection of Hartwell Court and Executive Avenue. The topography for most of Luria’s houses was flat, cleared landscape. Today’s tree-covered lots represent 53 years of growth of trees planted by the early owners.

Gaddy Brothers Houses

Luria Brothers continued to develop and build Holmes Run Acres until early 1953, when they sold the remaining lots to Gaddy Brothers Builders. The transition occurred on Hartwell Court,

where Luria's models are found on the lower dead end of Hartwell Court that backs onto the houses on Executive Avenue. The topography starting at Hartwell Court provided for more hilly terrain and wooded lots. Gaddy decided to continue the same architecture, with open wood beamed cathedral ceilings, two brick walled fireplaces, large expanses of glass, and the oversized four-foot door Luria had introduced. They also continued to site houses on quarter-acre lots.

It is interesting to note that Gaddy Brothers built a "modified" Luria model to finish Hartwell Court on its way to Executive Avenue. Along Hartwell Court, Gaddy took Luria's basic home and simply enlarged one dimension by two feet on both the two-level and the one-level slab models. The standard Luria size was 24'x36', either on one level or two. Gaddy made the houses on Hartwell Court 26'x36' and only offered the two-level with two bedrooms on the upper or main level and two on the lower level. The slab models, only four of which were built, boasted a larger living room and a third bedroom as the standard model offering.

The two-level models on Hartwell Court had a full shower bath on the lower level and, again, a slightly larger family/recreation room. Gaddy also continued with the wood beam cathedral ceilings, large expanses of glass, hardwood floors, and gas utilities. With the transition in builders came the introduction of electric cooking as either an early option or, near the end, as the standard. Also, Gaddy added another carport adaptation, as it now could appear as an extension to the end of the home instead of a protrusion to side or front, as were Luria's choices. Once Gaddy finished the houses along Hartwell Court and turned onto Surrey Lane, he began the building what I refer to as the "standard" Gaddy.

At this point, Gaddy also offered the option of wet plastered walls. I have been told that Gaddy "imported" or brought in some of his "family" or "relatives" from the "old country" to work for his company. It is with this infusion of family and craftsmen that Gaddy offered the option of wet plaster walls for a whopping \$300 extra charge! This home resembled the Luria two-level home inside and out, but with several subtle but key changes. First of all, he again expanded the home's footprint by two feet longer and wider than the original Luria. His houses were now 26'x38' or 1976 square feet on two levels. He also eliminated the slab model. In the changed footprint, Gaddy's houses allowed for two bedrooms, a living room, a larger separated dining area, kitchen, and full bath with tub and shower on the upper or main level. The lower level had two bedrooms, full tub with shower bath, family/recreation

“These are distinctive houses. Much thought, hard work, understanding and high-caliber design talent went into designing our community, our houses... Let us add or alter if we must, but only with understanding and restraint.”

room, outside access to a foyer through the now trademark four-foot door, and a laundry/utility room.

Clothes dryers and central air conditioners began to appear in the final sections of these houses. Gaddy also built a “catwalk” deck (approximately 3+ feet wide) off the living room’s large windowed section, using the now famous four-foot door for access to the deck from the living room. In addition to architecturally improving the look of the Luria model, it also provided a practical solution to the problem of cleaning those huge living room windows on the outside, a problem Luria model owners had wrestled with since the

In the changed footprint, Gaddy’s houses allowed for two bedrooms, a living room, a larger separated dining area, kitchen, and full bath with tub and shower on the upper or main level.

beginning. The lower level entry was recessed instead of having the flush door found in the Lurias. This allowed for a covered access to the front or, in some cases, the back door entry to the home. Gaddy’s larger footprint also introduced the upper-level entry through the side of the house into the living room instead of the dining area, as the Luria model had provided.

Down the hallway to the upper level bedroom section, there was a louvered door one could close to shut off the bedrooms from the living area. In the living room, Gaddy offered such options as a window next to the fireplace, a closet, or a fixed wall. The living room fireplaces in the Luria models had a large closet built into the brick wall. Gaddy eliminated this and, instead, provided raised hearths in some houses or a large brick wall in others. Gaddy fireplaces also had wood storage boxes built into the brick wall.

I have also seen a few special changes to the standard fireplaces, along with other alternative interior features. The most notable changes appeared in a few houses that were built and sold to “family.” In those, the house was larger, appliances were upgraded, and wet plaster walls were added.



Bodor Houses

I am not exactly sure when André Bodor began his work, but from what I can find, his first deliveries were around 1960, so I am guessing he started sometime in late 1958 or early 1959. The timeframe was approximately ten years from Luria's start to when Bodor finished Holmes Run Acres. Bodor contributed approximately 17 houses. Gaddy's headcount of houses is close to half of the total in Holmes Run, but I do believe there are more Lurias than Gaddys. Also worth noting here is that all three

Through the entire middle of the home was a floor-to-ceiling exposed brick wall.

builders used the same roofing materials – a raised or built-up tar-and-gravel roof surface. Even though there was pitch to the roofline, the profile was still more of a flat roof design than anything else, thus dictating the roofing materials used.

Bodor built along the same architectural lines as his predecessors, and as did Gaddy, he made his footprint larger and upgraded the materials. The style remains similar, but his finished product looks and feels quite different than the other two builders. The use of

Original Home Sizes

Luria Brothers
One Level
864 square ft

Luria Brothers
Two Level
1728 square ft

open wood beam cathedral ceilings, large expanses of glass, hardwood floors, and huge brick walled fireplaces is still there, only in larger quantity and more spectacular presentation. After Hartwell Court's transition houses, Gaddy built only one real model. Bodor managed two models. One was 30'x40' – four feet in each dimension larger than Luria's original footprint and a whopping 2400 square feet on two levels, sort of. What I mean is that, in order to raise the ceiling height in the lower level finished living areas of his houses, Bodor had a two-step-up egress from the living/dining/kitchen area of the home to the bedroom section, thus allowing for nine-foot ceilings in the lower level.

Bodor's two/three level floor plan had the same bi-level theme, with a lower level entrance facing the street, offering a true larger foyer entrance with slate floors as well as a fourth bedroom, a full ceramic tile shower stall bath, and a larger family/recreation room. In addition, nearly one-third of the lower level space was left unfinished and available for storage, something the prior two builders had neglected to offer! The upper level(s) had oak hardwood floors and a separate dining area, along with a small eat-in kitchen. The second model offered by Bodor was much smaller and included a living room/dining room combination and a galley kitchen with no eating space. The lower level foyer disappeared in favor of a smaller, unfinished storage/utility room. Still, the upper bedroom section offered three bedrooms, with a fourth bedroom in the lower level.

The real departure from the first two builders was not only the size and floor plan variations, but also in materials and design innovations. For example, from the hall, the upper-level bathroom looked normal, having a sink, toilet, and tub with shower. However, sliding open the glass doors in the tub area revealed another set of sliding doors which, when opened, led to another sink and toilet area for the master bedroom. Through the entire middle of the home was a floor-to-ceiling exposed brick wall. The section of this brick wall that ran through the aforementioned double bathroom had an exposed glazed treatment on the brick. Bodor also invested in a "boatload" – literally – of Philippine mahogany wood that was used to create interior floor-to-ceiling finished walls in many of the rooms and in open areas on both levels. Using brass screws to secure this wood and make it more attractive was the kind of enhancement Bodor introduced to distinguish his houses.

The kitchen offered a rather unusual cooking appliance, as it boasted ultra-modern, fold-down cook tops. These electric cook tops were hinged and able to lift up off the counter and store

against the wall when not in use, thus providing more usable counter space. Bodor also offered pocket doors to close off the kitchen from the dining room. His use of glass and space continued inside, with glass panels above kitchen cabinets to the ceiling, thus allowing light to filter into the kitchen from the adjacent living spaces. Bodor offered the larger carport and adjacent screened porch as standard features to his home. The carport extended from the home's side much as did Gaddy's, except it was larger and had a higher ceiling. Bodor's touches and changes made his models stand out as "different" from his predecessors.

Loyal Fans

Many a Holmes Run Acre resident has transitioned from a smaller Luria to a Gaddy and/or to a much larger Bodor. Each builder has a following, as many residents would not give up what they have for

Bodor offered the larger carport and adjacent screened porch as standard features to his home.

what the other builders' models might offer. What is true throughout the community is a love of the form and style that these three builders delivered and an interest in creating additions that may make the original structure bigger and "better" but that are still in keeping with the intent of the original builder.



Getting On With Your Project

Arvydas Barzdukas, Catherine Shaw, and Perry Burgess

Remodeling your house or adding to it is, more than anything, an exercise in constant decision-making. The first major decision will be who to hire to design the work.

Choosing a Designer:

There are several possible approaches to planning an addition or remodeling of your home.



1. Hiring an architect who is familiar (or is interested in becoming familiar) with HRA houses to provide design services and drawings is one possibility. Architect's services, including project visits and observation during construction, can add around 10 percent to the project costs, or more. An alternative may be to obtain a few hours of an architect's time to discuss your ideas and for initial, preliminary planning, and then turn to a contractor for preparation of permit and construction drawings and selection of interior finishes, appliances, fixtures, and other features of the project.
2. Going with a Design Builder. These generally are contractors who also offer design services as part of their overall fee. The drawings they prepare may not include as comprehensive construction specifications as those done by an architect, and they may not be willing to sell their design separately so that it can be put out for bids to other contractors. Working from the start with a reliable and experienced contractor who can stay within your budget, however, may outweigh seeking competitive bids.

Does the contractor have experience remodeling contemporary style houses, as opposed to building new houses or additions to traditional style builder's homes?

3. Creating a design yourself and then finding a contractor with HRA experience with whom to work out the details. This is

the least expensive route to take and may work well if the project is small or if you have a very clear idea of what you want to achieve.

When selecting a contractor, consider the following:

- What is the contractor's experience with architect-designed, non-traditional homes and design (i.e., a Holmes Run Acres house)? Be suspicious if he or she asks what you mean here.
- Does the contractor have experience remodeling contemporary style houses, as opposed to building new houses or additions to traditional style builder's homes?
- Ask for recent references. Preferably, these should be from within Holmes Run Acres or other, similar neighborhoods.
- Can the contractor readily estimate an average cost per square foot of a job like yours? (Look especially at estimates for projects similar to yours.)
- If you don't hire an architect, ask if the contractor offers design services and how the design of the project will be presented to you for review and evaluation. Will the contractor prepare comprehensive preliminary drawings for your approval? Ask about such details as sizing of the windows to accurately fit between the vertical structural



Make sure the contract requires keeping the project site and public areas orderly and clean.

members in the glass wall of your house and in other existing openings. (Smaller window sizes that require filling the openings with wide trim are less in keeping with the HRA architectural style than 4-foot nominal modular windows, which are similar to the original windows and can be provided by several manufacturers.)

- Ask what kind of a State or County license the contractor has. Is the contractor's license suitable for the size of the job? A licensed contractor will be bonded and insured, although it would not be out of line to inquire about the amount and type of insurance the contractor is carrying. Also, determine if you will need to obtain additional liability and property insurance during construction and to protect new work in place.
- Will the contractor obtain the building permit and all other County approvals, and arrange for all inspections? If the contractor asks you obtain the permits, unless you transfer

the permit to a licensed contractor upon signing the contract, you, in effect, become the contractor. In this circumstance, it may be more difficult to hold the contractor doing the work responsible for complying with the building code and for guaranteeing the quality of the work. This also may be a signal that the contractor you are hiring is not licensed.

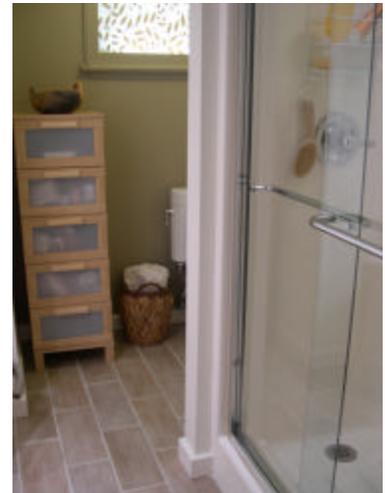
- Ask what type of contract does the contractor use, take time to read it and, perhaps, obtain legal advice before signing it. Think through very carefully any request for a deposit up front for materials or whatever. It may be reasonable to advance a percentage of the contracted amount to a contractor with whom you have previously done business, especially if the contract is for a small job where the cost will mostly be for materials. But it is unwise to advance money to a contractor with whom you have no track record. Ask about the draw schedule or when payments will be expected.
- Make sure you understand the difference between an initial estimate of costs and the agreed-upon cost of the project. The latter price should either be stated in writing or the method of arriving at such cost defined in the Owner—Contractor agreement. (For example, on a time and material basis, what the owner will furnish and the contractor will install, what is to be reused, and so on.) Ascertain that the agreement clearly provides for handling additional costs (“extras”) and change orders.



- How soon can the contractor start? (If available right away in a busy construction environment, why isn't he or she working?) What is the estimated duration of the project?
 - How does the contractor handle the punch list—i.e., the correction of the incomplete or improperly installed, applied, or finished items at the end of the project? (A good contractor knows that such corrections will be needed and will see to it that he and his sub-contractors will take care of them in a timely manner.)
- Make sure the contract requires keeping the project site and public areas orderly and clean. Also, ensure that the contract calls for the removal and legal disposal of all trash,

construction debris, and other leftover and discarded items from the job site at the completion of the job, before final payment is made.

- **Timing:** Do not hesitate to discuss matters of timing with your contractor. Although you can probably live in your house during smaller projects, larger ones may force you to move away from the construction during certain phases. Questions of timing may also be important when renovating window openings or pouring foundation in cold or wet weather. In addition, you may lose use of key functional spaces, such as kitchens and bathrooms, during the renovation process.
- Timing can also be key in such matters as ordering materials, staging subcontractors (plumbers, electricians, etc.), and arranging inspections. Understanding from the beginning how and when these parts of your remodeling project are likely to occur can make a huge difference regarding how easily you (and your neighbors) can handle these disruptions.
- Do not resent the County's inspectors. They are your best friends and are not there to give anyone an undue hard time or cause unnecessary delays. Fairfax County inspection service generally is of very high quality and will only safeguard your interests and will make the job better.



Given the special nature of the HRA house, it may be necessary or useful to seek the services of other specialists, such as kitchen designers, lighting designers, color consultants, and so forth. Services of a professional licensed structural engineer, both for County's approval and your own peace of mind, may be required to solve some of the more unusual structural problems. It is important to negotiate such consultants' participation and any fees involved with your contractor in advance and to have the contractor obtain your approval in the event he or she brings such consultants on board. If your contractor is not comfortable dealing with outside consultants, you may not have the right contractor.

The Planning Stage

Whether you hire a contractor who will provide design services as part of the job, an architect, or a home designer, or whether you "doodle" a sketch for your addition or remodeling project on your

dining room table by yourself, you need to give some thought to a number of planning and design issues

The basics



- Generally, the more time and money you spend on your drawings, the less time you will spend on construction and, frequently, this will save money. Well conceived and detailed plans will make the execution of the project that much easier. It costs a lot less to make your mistakes on paper and to correct them before the excavation for the foundations starts or the walls are going up.
- When laying out and sizing the rooms and other ancillary spaces, think about size and arrangement of the furniture and the circulation (interior traffic) patterns.
- Pay special attention to the relationship of the indoor and outdoor spaces and how the new addition will relate to your neighbors. What will be the view from your new space? What will the neighbors see? Will it be jarring and intrusive or pleasant to look at and in keeping with what the HRA residents are used to seeing from their homes? Will the proposed addition create any privacy issues for your house or for the houses next to yours?
- Carefully weigh what to discard and what to retain. In a given space, such as a bathroom or the kitchen, frequently it is easier and more cost effective to gut the room and replace all of the old wall and floor surfaces. This also facilitates the necessary replacement of the electrical wiring and plumbing pipes.

Generally, the more time and money you spend on your drawings, the less time you will spend on construction and, frequently, this will save money.

- Make sure you understand what is shown on your plans and can visualize what the project will look like when it is completed. Making changes because you don't like what was built using the drawings you have approved may cause costly delays and arguments with your builder that may be difficult to resolve.

Setbacks from the property lines (zoning issues):

- Your addition has to legally fit on your property. Holmes Run Acres subdivision is zoned R-3. This zoning category mandates a 30-foot setback in the front, 12-foot side yards, and 25-foot setback in the back. A corner lot has two “fronts,” one side yard, and one back yard.
- The street curb in front of your house is not necessarily your front property line. The County has a 9 or 10-foot easement paralleling the street. Also, there may be a storm sewer easement along one of your property lines.
- Before planning any addition, look at the House Location Plat (a certified survey, frequently required by the lender, that most owners get when they purchase the house) to determine the distances of the existing house from the property lines. That plat will show how much room there is on which side of the house for any expansion.
- It is best to stay within the setback lines with any construction, because getting a variance to encroach into any of the setbacks is not that easy, even when the County is granting variances. It takes time and can be costly. Presently, there is a moratorium on granting any variances while the law on justification of variances is being rewritten.
- If the proposed addition will be within inches of the setback lines, you may have to have a licensed surveyor calculate the distances from the property lines and prepare a proposed addition plat for submittal for the Building Permit. If it is later discovered that the structure you are building or have built is encroaching into the required setbacks, it may have to be torn down.

Enclosing a carport:

- Check the distances of the existing carport from the property lines shown on your House Location Plat. Setback distances for structures with open sides like a carport are different from those for fully enclosed structures.
- The Building Code requires any occupied space to have a continuous foundation to the depth of the frost line, which by code, is 24 inches below the grade along the enclosure wall. Most carports in Holmes Run Acres have a pier and a footing only under the columns supporting the roof. This means that the dirt below the edge of the slab has to be excavated and a foundation wall of either poured concrete, or masonry has to be



built from a level of 24 inches below grade to the underside of the slab.

- Furthermore, most carport slabs are not level. Depending on how much you want to raise the surface of the new floor and the proposed floor finish, the carport slab can be leveled either by pouring a layer of concrete or by building up the new floor on wooden “sleepers.” “Sleepers” should be pressure treated lumber and care should be taken to damp proof the slab to minimize moisture penetration. It probably is less expensive and easier just to level the floor with a relatively thin layer of concrete. The thickness of the new slab should be sufficient to prevent cracking, or a special self-leveling proprietary concrete mixture could be used.

What will the addition look like?



- Select, understand, and approve the materials, architectural elements, and finishes, paying special attention to the unique nature of HRA houses. In general, this means looking for woody feel, trim and light, unencumbered style, natural daylight and architectural features that replicate or resemble the spirit of the original house. “Traditional” architectural styles, such as Palladian windows, classical or “colonial” columns, wide and elaborate window and door casings, “crown molding,” and patterned floor bases do not fit well with the style of the HRA houses. Adding other decorative components, such as shutters, finials, assorted applied “gingerbread,” and so on, will also detract from the original architecture. Simplicity of the appearance should be the guiding principle of the proposed design.
- Exterior appearance is especially important. Selection of the siding is one key element because it is the largest expanse of material that will be visible to neighbors and passersby. Here, consider the texture, the scale and the especially the color.

Construction Considerations

Exterior walls:

- Most likely, the new walls will be built with 2x4 (or 2x6 if extra insulation is required) wood studs spaced at either 16 or 24 inches. Most common wall sheathing these days is what is known as “oriented strand board” (OSB), which has acceptable structural strength. Plywood, too, can be used.
- Total wall insulating value in Fairfax County now has to equal R-16, and insulating wall sheathing may have to be

used to achieve that rating. A minimum of R-15 fiberglass insulation should be used. Either Kraft paper or foil-faced insulation will work well. Make sure insulation is installed without gaps or tears and is carefully stapled to the studs.

- Most original houses in Holmes Run have vertical or horizontal wood siding, which now is somewhat difficult to get, is costly, and requires upkeep. Depending on the size and relationship of the proposed addition to the house and the available budget, there are several siding choices that work well with HRA houses: horizontal shiplap or random width vertical tongue-and groove wood siding, rough finished plywood that is grooved to resemble siding, brick and, when used selectively, natural stone and cedar shingles. In most cases, the wood looks best if it is painted or stained with earth-tone hues.



- New synthetic materials, such as “Hardiplank” lap siding (which still requires painting) are now available. They resemble wood and will last a long time. Typical, ubiquitous vinyl siding comes primarily in horizontal board patterns and is less likely to be successfully applied to HRA homes, although some manufacturers now make vertical vinyl siding. Also, vinyl “shake” or “shingle”-patterned siding that is virtually indistinguishable from wood and requires no upkeep is available.

Skylights:

- Innumerable types of skylights are available. They include single-thickness plastic, double plastic, and wood-frame glazed skylights, with tinted plastic or glass and with various combinations of insulated, Argon-filled, low-E, impact-resistant tempered safety glass. With tree branches overhanging our roofs, selecting safety-glazed skylights is highly recommended.
- It is a good idea to install skylights with a raised curb, which makes it easier to properly flash them into the roofing, although some very flat skylights have been successfully installed.
- Care should be taken not to make the opening in the roof deck too large, which would weaken the roof structure. Use care in installing a skylight in the kitchen if the refrigerator might be exposed to direct sunlight.

Replacing windows:



- A good improvement to your house is to replace existing single glazing with new insulating glass. Be aware that replacing the windows and the fixed glass in the glazed openings in a Holmes Run house can be a tricky and demanding job. Fortunately, several quality window manufacturers now offer custom-sized fixed and operable windows.
- About 50% of the window openings in a typical house can be closely fitted with most manufacturers' stock sizes; others should be custom fabricated. Here, good contractors or window installers are worth their weight in gold (and it will take about that much to get the job done properly). The homeowner will never recoup the expense of a good window replacement in energy savings; however, the comfort factor and the elimination of condensation, the prevention of deteriorating wooden windowsills, and the remarkable quiet of the interior may be worth the expense.
- The new windows may be painted to match the color of your house exterior or a contrasting color. Another choice is to use either aluminum or vinyl clad windows that come in many acceptable colors. Use caution in selecting pre-finished, clad window colors. Many vinyl windows cannot be painted successfully. Inside faces of the window frames can be factory finished (white) or painted, or stained on the job. The factory finish is very durable and less expensive than job-site painting.
- White windows can look clean and sleek in the store, but here in the woody acres, it can get mildewed and rather scruffy-looking.
- The code requires tempered safety glass in some locations (e.g., the large fixed window next to the front door). Check it out.
- The windows used in our homes were a mix of large sheets of glass and small operable windows. When remodeling the exterior of your house, it is a good idea to retain some large picture windows to keep your house open to our beautiful surroundings and plantings, and to let in a lot of light, both of which were key original design criteria.
- Window types that work well in HRA homes include casements that swing out to the side; awnings that swing up from the bottom; large, fixed panes of glass ("picture windows"); in some cases, glass block "walls" and certain types of sliding windows.



- Windows that do NOT work well in HRA homes, because they are not in the style of the neighborhood, are double hung (those that slide up and down); round, circular windows; or mullioned or small pane (e.g., 6 over 6) windows (often called “true divided lights”).
- Custom shaped windows (often long triangles) along the tops of rooms that follow the pitch of the roof can be very handsome. Such windows make the room feel like it extends all the way to the eaves. Care should be taken in how such windows are framed and trimmed to avoid, as sometimes happens, the “Halloween pumpkin,” cutout effect.
- Thermo pane windows: If your picture windows fog, the insulating seal has failed and the whole glass unit needs to be replaced. Almost any glass company in the yellow pages can do this.
- Beware of offers by “typical” window installers to replace your windows with “custom vinyl” sash or other type of windows that are installed by the thousand in traditional builders’ houses. That just won’t work in a Holmes Run Acres house.



Exterior doors:

- The 4-foot wide door that is part of the original HRA house living room is a “signature” piece of the design. Flush, solid core exterior doors, free of any panel pattern or other ornamentation are most in keeping with the style of the mid-century modern homes like HRA, although some pre-finished patterned entrance doors and frames have been successfully installed. Save the original door, if you can, and consider upgrading it installing new ball-bearing hinges, weather-stripping, insulating and code-required safety glass, new and contemporary hardware, and by refinishing the wood.
- To provide access to a patio or a deck, a sliding glass door may be considered. Unless the sliding door is placed in the end (gable) wall, removing one of the 4-foot module vertical roof supports presents a structural engineering challenge.

Electrical upgrades:

- With the advent of central air-conditioning, most likely all of the HRA houses now already have upgraded electrical service. If your house does not have at least 200 Amp service, plan to increase the service for any significant remodeling or addition.

- All new work will have to conform to the electrical code for location, spacing, and type of the receptacles. Upgrading the circuitry within the existing house is not that easy, but an effort should be made to do that whenever possible. Obviously, kitchen and bathroom remodeling will require considerable rewiring of those spaces and it may be possible to rewire other outlets and devices in the house as part of that work.
- Smoke detectors in all sleeping rooms and at least one located on each level of the home are now required. The code is very specific when and where hard-wired (interconnected) smoke detectors have to be installed in new work. Keep in mind that with our open deck roofs, thought should be given to how that is to be done to avoid ugly surface-mounted installation as an afterthought.

Heating and air-conditioning (HVAC):



- Most of the time, it is desirable to update or enlarge as needed the gas-fired furnace for heating and install an electrical air-conditioning system. If less than a high efficiency gas furnace is installed or retained, the code now requires a metal liner for the masonry flue. High efficiency furnaces are vented by PVC pipes through the wall (or roof). Take care not to run the exhaust vent pipe through the wall close to a window, because rising steam can be annoying. Furthermore, combustion air requirements for the gas-fired furnaces now are a lot more stringent and should be addressed.
- Many additions may require a separate heating system. The simplest to install is an electric heat pump, which heats and cools. For small spaces, a through-the-wall heat pump may be used. A second combination gas furnace and electric air-conditioning system could also be installed to serve larger additions. The advantage here would be gaining flexibility in the use of the systems; however, weigh the costs.
- More esoteric systems, such a radiant heat beneath a wood, stone, carpet, or ceramic floor might be considered for heating season use, but air-conditioning still would be needed for the summer.
- Heating and air-conditioning requirements should be considered and addressed in the planning stages for their location and fit; however, it is best to leave the heat loss / heat gain calculations, the sizing of the system, the design of the air distribution (ductwork), and the type and location of

the controls to your contractor's mechanical (HVAC) sub-contractor.

- A programmable thermostat is definitely a good investment.

Interior odds and ends:

- Select contemporary style lever-type door hardware in chrome, satin nickel or brushed aluminum finish. It is well worth it to incur some extra expense for door hardware, because cheap, "builders' type" hardware does not hold up well and soon becomes an annoyance.
- Interior trim and casing. That's those narrow pieces of wood that are nailed to conceal assorted joints between different materials and surfaces. In our homes, less is more. The original HRA house interior trim was what is known as "lattice work," that is, simple rectangular trim with no grooves, curlicues or ridges. Some "quarter-round" trim also was used. If possible, match existing trim in size and appearance.



Driveway repairs:

A considerable portion of the driveway replacement costs is removal and disposal of the existing concrete driveway. Existing driveways may be topped with asphalt; however, various concrete pavers and patterned concrete will make an especially attractive driveway. Pavers have to be installed over a stone base of a depth recommended by pavers' manufacturer or, preferably, over a concrete slab. Most original HRA driveways are somewhat narrow and paving a wider, say a 12-foot wide, driveway should be considered.

Final Thoughts

The above should not be considered as "all-inclusive" guidelines or instructions concerning remodeling or adding to a Holmes Run Acres home. Much other good information and material is available for reference on the internet and in libraries—and from neighbors, who have gone through it all.

Fairfax County has a very well organized and extensive website covering Code and Zoning matters and has many available handouts with good detailed information about most facets of home construction, and the home owner would be well advised to consult all of it for the latest, most up-to-date information.



Most importantly, after you have moved into the new space—enjoy it and think how nicely it has contributed to the appearance and quality of your community. If you keep those two objectives in mind, everybody will be happy.



Arvydas Barzdukas' immutable "Laws of Project Management":

1. No project is ever completed on time, within the budget, and with the same workers who started it. A certain amount of delay because of weather, deliveries of materials, inspections, and other factors may be inevitable and may be beyond the contractor's control. Accept that.
2. A project progresses quickly until it is 90% completed and then, seemingly, remains at 90% forever. Building an addition to a home is not exactly like building a Swiss watch. Don't look for perfection.
3. When things appear to be going better, you have overlooked something. (Only kidding!)
4. If project content is allowed to change freely, the rate of change will exceed the rate of progress. Avoid changes if at all possible. Most frequently, they add nothing more than costs.
5. No project is ever completely "debugged"; attempts to perfectly "debug" the project won't make anyone happy. Sometimes, making interminable corrections only makes matters worse.
6. A carelessly planned project will take three times longer to complete than expected; a carefully planned project will only take twice as long.
7. People working on a project detest progress reporting because it vividly manifests their lack of progress. Steady progress, however, is to be expected and should be visible.

Roofing and Re-roofing Your House

Arvydas Barzdukas

This section presents basic information to acquaint the homeowner with the types of roofing suitable for installation or replacement of existing roofing for HRA houses. This information is intended only for general guidance and does not represent complete or comprehensive roofing specifications or instructions for roofing installation. In selecting a roofing system for replacement of the existing roofing or new roofing for an addition matching HRA exposed wood deck roof construction, the homeowner should rely on the advice of a construction professional or a roofing contractor experienced in application of low slope or flat roofing.

Regardless of the system selected, the basic roofing components are as follows:

- 1. Existing roof structure.** It is assumed that either the existing T&G (tongue-and-groove) wood plank roof deck will be retained or, building a new addition, a similar roof construction will be used. The nominal 2" x 6" decking actually is 1½" thick and 5½" wide; therefore, suitable length fasteners should be selected so as not to penetrate the wood decking. The systems described here would not be applicable to conventional roof construction or sloped roofs.
- 2. Vapor barrier.** A single layer of asphalt building felt, weighing 15-pound per 100 square feet should be nailed directly to the wood roof deck. Felt comes in 36-inch wide rolls and should be installed lapping 6 inches at seams.
- 3. Insulation.** Rigid insulation board is laid over the vapor barrier sheet. The original HRA roof insulation was 1½" thick fiberboard type insulation with very low thermal resistance value (about R5). Although Fairfax County allows replacing the roof system over existing insulations, it is advisable to replace existing insulation with a currently available one that has a much higher thermal resistance rating.

The most efficient rigid insulation is the so-called "iso board" (polyisocyanurate board), which has thermal resistance value of R7.2 to R8.5 per inch of thickness. Environmentally harmful CFC (chlorofluorocarbon) was used in manufacturing the early "iso" board insulation; however, that

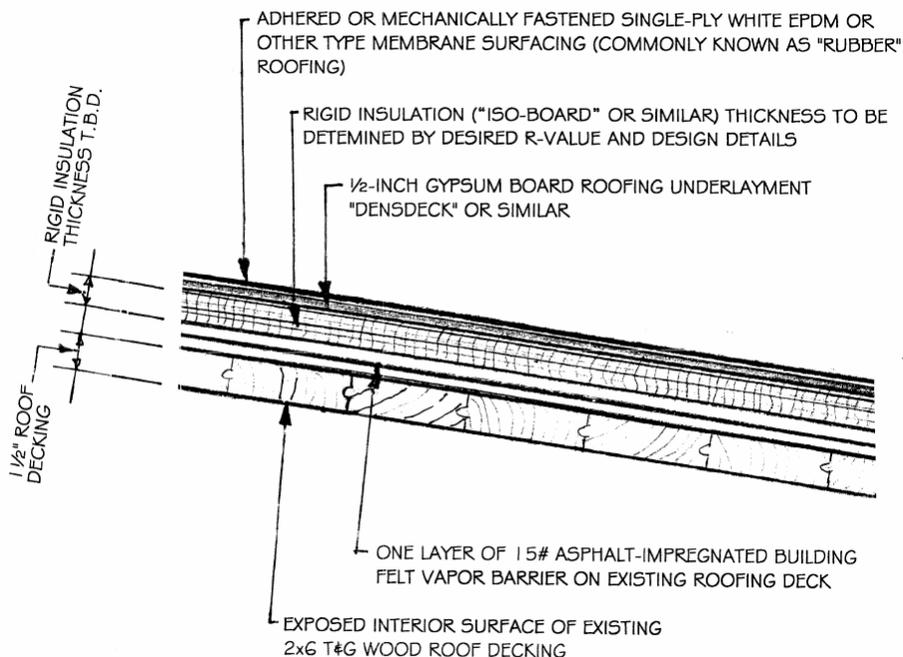
process is being phased out. There are other insulating boards, such as expanded polystyrene (about R5 per inch thickness), and beaded polystyrene, providing between R3.5 and R4.5 per inch.

In constructing an addition, complying with the current building code may be difficult using rigid insulation without radically changing the profile (fascia thickness) of the HRA roof, and other means of providing additional insulation may be needed in order to comply with the Virginia Energy Code requirements for the building envelope. For replacement, use as much insulation as possible. Fairfax County does not require obtaining a building permit for roof replacement but will perform an inspection upon request.

4. Suitable Roof Systems

Single-ply membrane roofing. (Detail A)

Single-ply reinforced roofing membrane is commonly known to as “rubber” roofing. The most frequently used material is EPDM (Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer), but many other types of



A. SINGLE-PLY MEMBRANE ROOFING SYSTEM

membranes (CPA, CPE, PVC, TPO, etc.) are available from various manufacturers. It is produced in thicknesses ranging from 30 to 60 mils (thousandths of an inch) and in rolls from 12 feet to 50 feet wide. Using wide rolls minimizes the number of seams.

Membrane cannot be applied directly to the insulation and a ½"-thick gypsum roofing underlayment or plywood must be installed over the insulation and fastened through to the wood deck. This will also keep the insulation mechanically attached to the roof.

Single-ply roofing is installed either fully adhered or mechanically fastened. HRA roofs are not suitable for the loosely laid, ballasted systems. A fully adhered system is installed by a continuous coating of a bonding adhesive that glues the membrane to the underlayment substrata. The mechanical system uses screws with large coated washers to fasten the membrane to the deck. Where the roof is visible, this may be unsightly and undesirable. All seams should be lapped a minimum of 3 inches and mechanically fastened and glued.

Membrane is available in black, gray, and white colors with smooth finish. White is the preferable color for residential installation; however, it does soil and streak easily and can become unsightly. Such roofs do not provide a very good traffic surface, and if the roof is damaged, the puncture "wounds" should be professionally repaired.

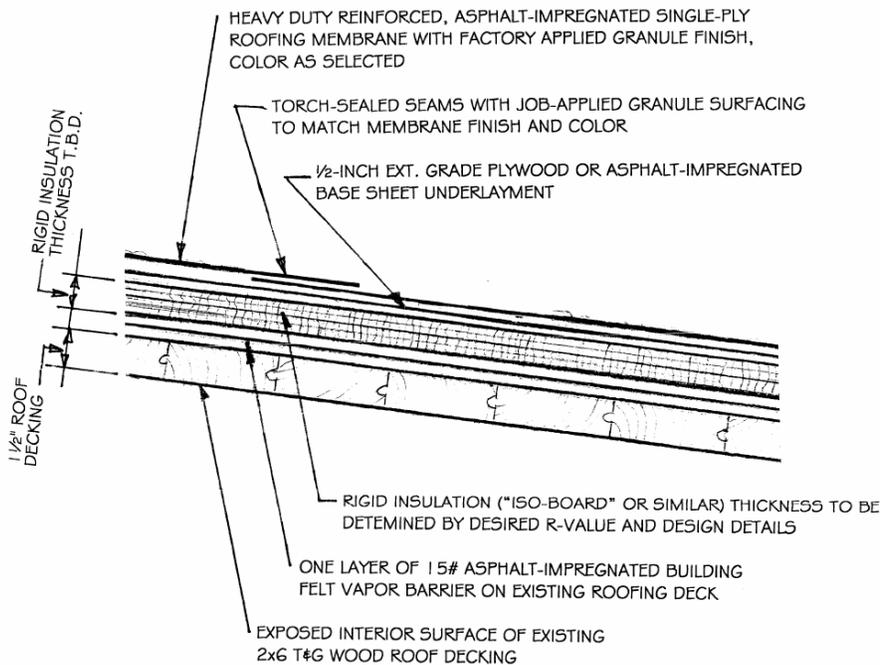
Modified bitumen single-ply roofing. (Detail B)

Modified Bitumen (MB) is a fiberglass or other membrane that has had modifiers added to it to give it plastic or rubber-like properties. The most common types of modifiers being used are APP (Atactic Polypropylene) and SBS (Styrene Butadiene Styrene).

Rolls of modified bitumen membrane come in widths of 36 inches. Outer surfacing for these roll materials most often consists of adhered mineral granules. This roofing now is available in several attractive colors, and a lighter color should be selected where the roof will be exposed to direct sunlight.

Asphalt impregnated wide base sheet or, better yet, plywood underlayment fastened through the insulation to the deck, should be installed over the insulation to provide proper substrata for the roofing. Seams should be lapped a minimum of 3 inches.

APP membranes are applied using a torch. The back of the sheet has extra asphalt on it that, when heated, bonds to the substrate.



B. MODIFIED BITUMEN SINGLE PLY ROOFING SYSTEM

SBS membranes can be hot asphalt applied, torch applied, or cold process applied. The black ooze that emanates from heat-sealing the seams can be minimized and covered with powdered surfacing matching the roofing to eliminate any unsightly detraction from an otherwise viable roofing system.

On modified bitumen roofs, the homeowner can easily locate where damage by falling tree branches has occurred and repair it with regular roofing cement. It might be handy to ask the roofer to leave a small amount

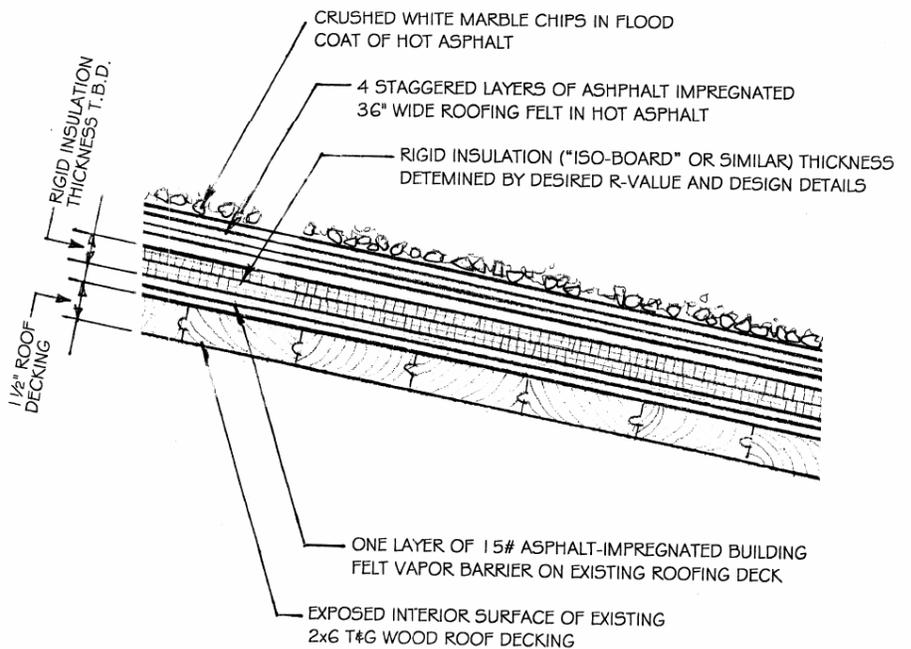
of the matching powdered granules for use over larger patches, when needed. This type of roof also tends to retard the growth of moss and vegetation.

Built-up roofing system. (The original HRA roofing.) (Detail C)

Depending on the outer surfacing of the insulation board, an optional asphalt impregnated base sheet may or may not be applied over the insulation.

Asphalt impregnated roofing, which comes in rolls 36 inches wide, is then installed in layers, with each layer leaving about an 8-inch wide reveal of the sheet below. The total thickness of the roof membranes is four sheets, hence the name “four-ply system.” Each layer is imbedded in a full coat of hot mopped asphalt.

A final coat of hot asphalt is mopped entirely over the finished roof surface and then covered with a protective layer of crushed aggregate. Crushed slag was used for the original HRA roofs;



C. 4-PLY BUILT-UP ROOFING SYSTEM

the preferred topping now is crushed white marble. The aggregate embeds itself into the asphalt and provides a walking and protective surface.

5. Flashing.

Either galvanized sheet metal or aluminum flashing in suitable profiles must be installed at all the edges of the roof. Aluminum flashing can be obtained in several colors to match the gutters. Request oversized gutters for gutter replacement.

Renovating Kitchens and Bathrooms in HRA Houses

Catherine Shaw and Dee David



As you are planning your Holmes Run Acres kitchen, it is important to carefully consider safety issues. It is best to work with a professional designer, preferably kitchen and bath certified, to alleviate any issues, and stay within the law. Reputable contractors will also know what is required and will steer you in the right path.

Special considerations for HRA kitchens and baths

Renovating a kitchen or bath in Holmes Run Acres is a little different than in other locations. Why? We have a wonderful wood ceiling that can really affect our overall look of the space. When selecting fixtures, it will be important to take this into consideration. In addition, the spacing and overall look of HRA homes is very simple and basic. It is a good idea to emulate this as you select finishes or hardware, so that your overall look is cohesive and strong. Clean architectural lines are the basis of HRA home design—carry this through your kitchen or bath project, and you can't go wrong.

How to approach your kitchen or bath project

- Determine the scale—how big a project are you considering?
- Spend some time planning how much you want to spend
- Begin your research with materials + labor costs, and how these add up...for example, a cabinet price always does not include delivery or installation
- Consider the types of appliances you want/ are willing to invest in/ need
- Evaluating your needs/ questions to ask yourself as you begin:
 - How many cooks in the kitchen? How many people in the bathroom at one time—one, two, or more?
 - What is the style of your cooking—baking, meals done for a whole week and frozen, need for lots of chopping surfaces, etc., preparing meals from scratch, reheating prepared meals?



Kitchens and bathrooms: the core of functionality in your Holmes Run Acres house

Recommendations of how to find help

- Classes and workshops are available through the Fairfax Adult Continuing Education program about kitchen design that covers many of these topics, as well as installation.
- Seek out a certified specialist or a skilled designer through a showroom or through National Kitchen and Bath Association.
- Follow NKBA Kitchen Planning Guidelines that can be found at: http://www.nkba.org/xindustry/planning_guidelines_detail.asp?sec=k
- Ask for skilled help on the HRA listserv or from neighbors who have had good experiences.
- Check <http://www.allaroundthehome.com/kitchen.asp> for remodeling contractors in Maryland and Virginia.

Type of work assignments to hire out or get skilled help for

There are two basic areas where professionals can assist:

1. Design
2. Installation, labor
 - carpentry
 - plumbing
 - electrical
 - framing
 - drywall
 - flooring

Money-saving tips

PLAN. This is really important. Consider all the possibilities and take time for this. In the end, it will save you money and reduce your stress.

Research material options at showrooms, in magazines (see resource section of HRA web site or starting on page 37 in this publication).

Ask your neighbors and colleagues for tips and recommendations.

Remember, good ideas do not have to be expensive.

Kitchen and bathroom renovation terms

Face lift: Changing surfaces (countertops, flooring, wall finishes)

Change out: Replacing all cabinetry, appliances, lighting and minor modifications with layout

Complete redesign: In addition to the above, relocating plumbing, electrical and possibly relocating walls and windows

Relocation/ additions: doing any of the above in a newly added space to your home.

Materials to consider when calculating your HRA kitchen or bathroom budget

- Cabinetry, accessories (cutlery divider, trash pull out) and hardware (drawer pulls)
- Countertops—laminated (Formica), quartz composite (Silestone), stone (granite), wood (butcher block), metal (stainless steel), tile (ceramic, glass, stone), solid surface (Corian)
- Backsplash—4” of same material as countertop or full splash i.e. ceramic tile with a pattern.
- Flooring—wood, tile, ceramic, vinyl, cork, bamboo, etc.
- Lighting
 - General—overall ceiling type lighting, example track or recessed cans, surface mounted fixtures
 - Task—under cabinet
 - Decorative—pendants
- Appliances, fixtures and fittings (sink faucets, etc.)
- For bathrooms only: tub or shower surrounds and/or wainscoting (normally tile first, solid surface second, Swannstone, Corian, acrylic)
- Wall surfaces



Finishes in HRA houses

Catherine Shaw

Introducing a painless way to get everything to look good together



The clean lines, the way one space flows to the next (spatial relationships), the finishes and the lighting all come together to create a unique interior decoration and design problem for HRA houses. When not challenged with “why doesn’t it fit?” we are strapped with “why doesn’t it match?,” which can be frustrating.

My mom said it best when she counseled me to remember that our houses are made with humble materials, not easily dressed up, but with a little finesse and imagination, made to look astoundingly accomplished and be the envy of your friends. What did she mean by this? This is the way I added to her philosophies...

Begin with the ceiling

Finishes: what are they?

Finishes are the final look of any object in a space. For example, finishes in your home may include:

- wood floors stain color
- trim texture and color
- paint colors and glossiness
- upholstery
- carpeting
- drape color and material— is it nubby and rough, or smooth and silky?
- rugs
- accent items
- hardware— doorknobs, cabinet pulls, ceiling fans
- appliances
- and on and on...

There is a tremendous amount of wood and color in our ceilings. Start with that. Does it have red tones or yellow tones? Is it almost black? There are all colors of the rainbow in our ceilings, so find which ones are present in your abode and work with them instead of against them.

Move on to match your finishes

Finishes: what are they? See inset to the right.

For example, if you have a fir ceiling like mine with reddish tones, you can attempt to “bring out” those tones with more red coloring in your finishes, or go with a color opposite on the color wheel—green and the variations of green. You might also consider an analogous color scheme: use colors next to red on the color wheel—in this case, orange and purple tones, to bring up and support the red.

Consider texture, too

One thing we forget about finishes—they have

minds of their own when it comes to their texture. In other words, you can paint the same color blue on a rough surface and a smooth one, and it will look completely different. Why? Because the rough surface is casting little shadows, making it look darker.

This works the same way for finishes other than paint. That coarse 1970's upholstered sofa (i.e., nubby to the max) will have a different "visual feel" than one the same exact color in leather. Do not underestimate this: It can be the most difficult issue when you update your sofa (a decision for my husband and me that was harder than selecting both of our cars, by the way).

Rules of thumb for HRA interiors

- *Simple furniture with clean lines generally needs less "visual space" than some of the more ornate, bulky pieces*
- *Carrying one overarching color scheme throughout the whole house helps to unify it and make it look bigger and more cohesive. This doesn't mean making everything the same color. It means "from the same family of colors and ideas."*
- *Defining a space with area rugs is a neat trick*
- *Contrasting finishes—for example, a counter in a bathroom contrasting with the bathroom cabinet makes it "pop" and look fresh.*

Outdoor colors and finishes—a note about the setting of the house

One of the challenges of HRA houses is that they are very much in tune with their environment, inviting it in through expanses of glass, good views, and wonderful windows.

There are a few questions and ideas to consider as you are making a color selection for your house:

1. How does the color go with your neighbors' houses?
2. Drive around the neighborhood and look at combinations during different times of the day.
3. Buy a few quarts of different colors and paint a swatch at least 3' x 3' of each, and live with it for at least a week. Colors will look completely different *on* the house as opposed to *in* the can or *on* the paint strip.
4. With furniture: it is a great idea to continue your interior ideas into the "outside rooms."
5. Does your color and furniture look good with the woody and natural surroundings?
6. Does it blend in to the environment? This is something that was intended by this style of architecture, and it is more successful visually to not work against it.

Internet Resources

Catherine Shaw

Links to neighborhoods like ours

<http://www.eichlernetwork.com/>

This is an amazing network of thousands of mid-century modern-housed enthusiasts.

<http://users.ev1.net/~michaelb/bend/links.htm>

Click here for a list of neighborhoods, communities and shopping that is truly astounding.

Preservation

For those interested in historic preservation, the following article from the National Trust might be of interest.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org/teardowns/index.html>

Bookstores and publishers of note

The National Gallery: Has a great architectural section with wonderful photography books on the subject of modern design.

<http://www.nga.gov/shop/books.htm>

AIA Bookstore: The bookstore run by the American Institute of Architects with all the best titles.

<http://www.aiabookstore.com/>

Rizzoli Books: This publisher does a wonderful job of covering the architectural industry.

<http://www.rizzoliusa.com/>

The National Building Museum: Located downtown DC, this shop has some great books about architecture and building.

<http://mivasecure.abac.com/nbmorg/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store Code=NBMS&Category Code=BAC>

Keywords to use to find information online:

If you are searching on Google or Yahoo, try using some of these keywords to find great information:

Neutra

famous architect who designed houses similar to ours

Eichler

another famous architect who designed houses similar to ours

Mid-century modern

the style of an HRA house

Case study houses

what inspired many mid-century modern architectural approaches

California modern

another name for this sort of design

Eames

famous for their furniture and also architectural accomplishments

Magazines

Atomic Ranch: This is THE magazine about our houses!

Check it out!

<http://www.atomic-ranch.com/>

Sunset Magazine: the magazine of Western living. Though HRA is not in the West Coast, this magazine covers many of the same tenants of modern design in their articles—clean lines, use of natural materials, etc. and shows you how to do it easily.

<http://www.sunset.com/sunset/>

Dwell Magazine: possibly the best magazine for modern living today. Their advertisements are a bevy of manufacturers that look great in HRA houses.

<http://www.dwellmag.com/>

Metropolitan Home magazine: a standard in the area of modern design, this magazine has great feature articles and lists tons of great resources for updating houses like ours in HRA.

<http://www.methome.com/>

Furniture

Design Within Reach: A great resource for furniture that has clean lines and is available with a short wait.

<http://www.dwr.com/>

Room and Board: After shopping at great length for a sofa of realistic proportions, we finally found one here. They also have stylish outdoor furniture.

<http://www.roomandboard.com/rnb/>

Daniel Donnelly: A local seller of fine modern furniture and other objects from yesteryears. His shop is in Alexandria, VA.

<http://www.danieldonnelly.com/>

Mid Century Modern: Specializing in the finest re-issues of modern furniture classics from Knoll, Vitra, Modernica, Cherner Chair Company, Architectural Pottery, Malm Fireplace and Daniel Donnelly.

<http://www.mid-century-modern.com/>

