

1742 Portland Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104

When looking for a new home 24 years ago to raise our family, schools were the number one item and this house exceeded our goals being in the Central High School and Ramsey Junior High School attendance areas. We were specifically looking for a duplex. We liked the idea of an extra income stream from the rental portion helping with the mortgage payments. We also liked having another family in the building for the added security created by having someone in the building when we were away. We loved the special feel created in the Macalester/Merrian Park area in being a college neighborhood with convenient shopping and entertainment within walking distance. When we moved into our home 24 years ago we wanted to create:

- An energy efficient house
- A safe, secure and fun place to raise our family
- A home with plenty of storage and closet space

To make our house energy efficient the first thing we did was to have fiberglass insulation blown into the exterior walls from the inside of the house. This prevented the unsightly holes on the exterior you often see when brick and stucco homes are insulated from the exterior. On the third floor we insulated the rafters and exceeded an R-32 insulated roof.

While we were insulating the walls, we removed all of the dead weights from the windows on the first and second floors and blew fiberglass into the dead weight cavities. We then had all the windows milled and fitted with insulating vinyl sashes and re-glazed the windows. An added benefit of the new sashes is that it allows them to tilt into the house for easy cleaning. We installed glass block in all the basement windows for better insulating value and security. Next we replaced all the windows on the third floor. Finally, we replaced all the windows in the 1st and 2nd floor "sun rooms" with Pella windows and added baseboard heat, making them four season rooms. In fact, we used our sun room as a fourth bedroom.

We wanted to hear and see the kids playing in the backyard from the second floor, so when we remodeled the kitchen adding new cabinets, we moved the kitchen door to the top of the stairs adding the back yard window into the kitchen space. This removed the landing at the top of the stairs and by today's building codes this is not allowed. If one wished, the door could be moved to bring this up to code, but you would lose direct contact with the back yard and need to remove the built-in, fold-down table. We also added a spiral stairs to the third floor to create better occupant circulation by having two exits from the third floor. The spiral stairs are narrow and have six inch rail spacing and by today's building codes would not be allowed. The stairs can be simply removed and the railing gate permanently secured.

The basement is typical of this vintage of home with stacked limestone walls, meaning the walls may be damp at times, but we have never had a wet floor. The floor drain by

the stairs drains very slowly but a new drain ball assembly will solve that issue. To lessen moisture issues we poured concrete around the perimeter of the house to drain water away and tuck pointed the lower brick. In the summer we run a dehumidifier and fans to circulate the air. We have seen some mold at the base of the furred out walls with paper faced gypsum board, which can be replaced with non-paper gypsum board to eliminate this issue. The basement space became the after school hang out for our children and their friends. We had an under counter refrigerator for beverages and snacks. On the counter we had Nintendo games, and of course we all played a lot of ping pong.

When we insulated the third floor rafters we took the opportunity to increase storage and closet space. The porch access was converted into a walk-in closet. Occasionally we have noticed some dripping in the 2nd floor sun room. We think this is coming from the railing cap on the porch and believe the new roof and flashing on the rail cap will have solved the issue. We replaced the old furnace on the third floor with an energy efficient furnace and added air conditioning with vents into the kitchen and both bedrooms on the second floor. We also ran co-ax TV wiring and computer cabling, but later switched to wireless and we get a good connection signal throughout the house.

The back yard was a special place for our family with the generous patio space, basketball hoop on the garage, large lawn and oh those tasty raspberries with a mid and late summer crop. The back yard lawn has in-ground concrete piers for volleyball nets. We would mow the grass long to create the lines for a half volleyball court and many nights played under the security lights. As we have aged and the children grown older we have become interested in our landscaping. When we lost our huge apple tree we had black ants trying to move in, but Orkin stopped them dead in their tracks and now we have a beautiful maple tree starting to give shade to the back yard. Graduations provided great opportunities for exterior projects. Our oldest son's graduation saw the addition of the front yard landscaping with a planting berm to retain rain water in the front yard. Our middle son enjoyed the peaceful sounds of the new backyard waterfalls at his graduation party. Finally, the youngest experienced the dazzling colors from the extensive flower plantings and the lush pacasandra lawn ivy out front.

We hope you enjoy your tour and will be on the look out for the many hidden storage areas such as the space above the front stairs. On the third floor there are many including: under the bed, in the cedar chest next to the built in dresser drawers and fold-down desk, behind both closets under the eaves, behind the convenient stacked washer/dryer with fold-down counter, and the secret room behind the book shelves.

The secret room was a favorite spot for our children to play games with friends, read books and have sleepovers. It is tall enough for an adult to stand, has a telephone jack and lights. It is the first place visiting children head to when they visit to play with games and toys.