

2026 RotY Submission
Residential Kitchen
\$50,000 - \$100,000



Project Objective

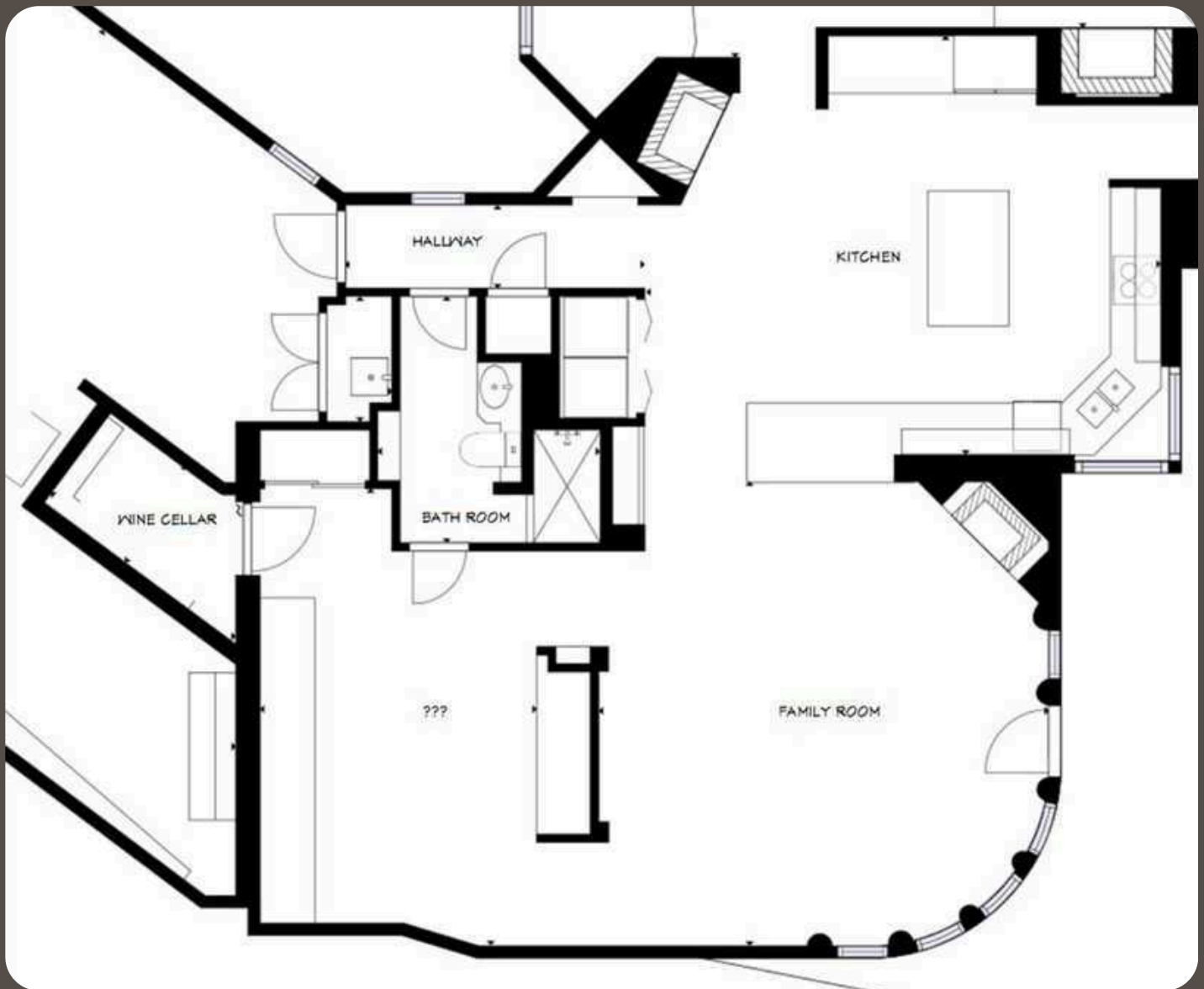
- Complete a full renovation of the main house and casita within an aggressive four-month schedule from close of escrow, including design and construction.
- Adhere to a tight, fixed investment budget with no flexibility for overruns.
- Address structural masonry fireplaces that limited layout and design options.
- Update and refine the heavily Southwestern aesthetic to attract a broader range of buyers while maintaining regional authenticity.

Solutions & Results

- Concurrent design and demolition allowed the team to meet the accelerated timeline without compromising quality or coordination.
- Locally sourced, in-stock materials and a two-week lead-time modular cabinet line ensured on-time delivery while supporting budget goals.
- Preserved architectural character by retaining the custom wood doors and ceilings, blending original craftsmanship with modern functionality.
- Redesigned the layout to improve spatial flow and highlight the previously awkward fireplace as a balanced architectural feature.
- Introduced slab-style cabinetry with a subtle rustic texture, matte black fixtures, and warm finishes that complement the existing wood elements for a cohesive, modern desert aesthetic.
- Delivered a move-in-ready home that exceeded client expectations, enhanced market appeal, and positioned the property for maximum resale value.

The result is a thoughtful renovation that delivers both functional improvement and elevated design—demonstrating that creativity and craftsmanship can thrive even under tight constraints.

Floor Plan: Before



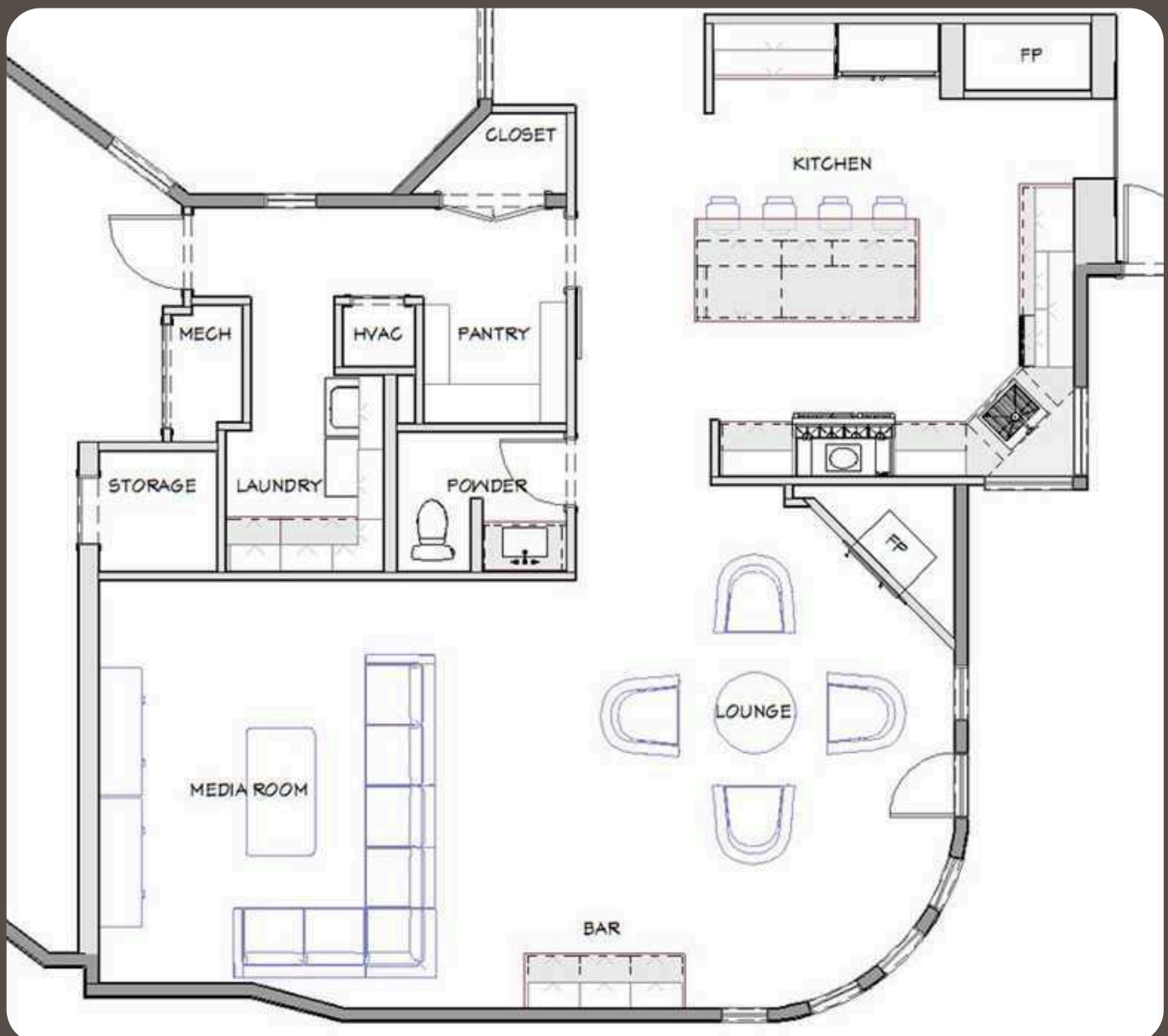
The original configuration featured a cluttered owner's entry that combined a walk-through full bathroom, laundry closet, and undersized pantry, all converging directly into the main kitchen. The layout lacked both functional efficiency and design intent. To improve spatial flow and usability, the team reimagined and reconfigured the entire area.

An awkwardly angled fireplace further complicated the new kitchen layout. Despite its structural role in supporting the roof, its removal was essential to achieve proper proportions and circulation.

Floor Plan: After

The new configuration creates defined zones and greatly improved functionality. The former walk-through full bathroom was converted into a dedicated laundry room with ample counter space and modern amenities. Relocating the powder room enhanced guest accessibility and improved circulation throughout the home. The pantry was doubled in size, and an additional storage closet introduced much-needed organization and efficiency.

In the kitchen, the island was rotated 90 degrees to increase seating, expand countertop space, and improve traffic flow. The large adjoining room was divided into two purposeful zones—one for conversation and one for TV viewing—offering flexibility for entertaining. The former wine cellar was reclaimed to restore a true three-car garage, a far more valuable and marketable feature than a niche amenity. Collectively, these updates maximize usability and bring a renewed sense of cohesion, purpose, and modern livability to the home.



Renderings

Due to the numerous obstacles uncovered during demolition, the design team had limited time to produce renderings for this portion of the project.

These renderings were utilized by the real estate team to pre-market the property while construction was still underway.

The originally selected slab material was intended to anchor the design; however, when the fabricator arrived for pickup, one of the two book matched slabs was found to be cracked. With no replacement inventory available for more than 30 days, the team was forced to make an immediate alternate selection—one that successfully maintained the intended balance of warmth, contrast, and drama.



Kitchen



Before

The original color palette lacked contrast, causing elements to blend together without clear definition or visual interest.



After

A neutral color pallet is accentuated with dark cabinets and accent ceiling to add contrast & drama.

Kitchen



Before

Cabinet placement minimizes natural light and makes the window appear incidental to the design.



After

The new focal point becomes the window, naturally drawing the eye outward to highlight the stunning desert landscape.

Kitchen



Before

A wall of appliances with one small island of counter space to share.



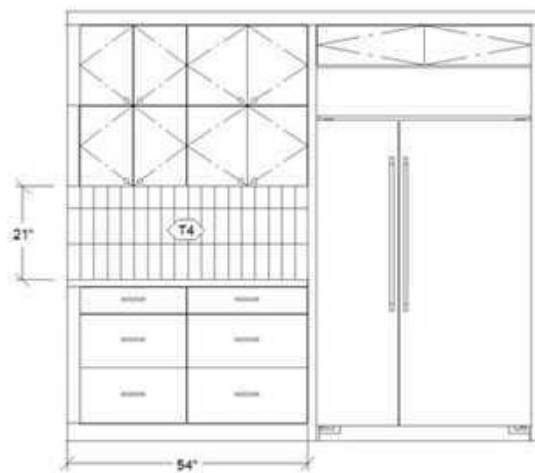
After

The new layout enhances functionality by placing appliances in their most efficient locations.

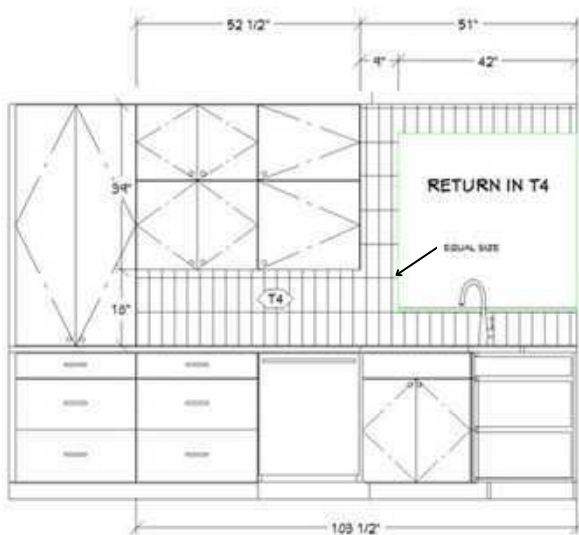
Elevations

The precision placement of every tile defined the quality of the installation. Establishing expectations early through detailed drawings ensured the entire team understood the level of accuracy that was mission critical to the design's success.

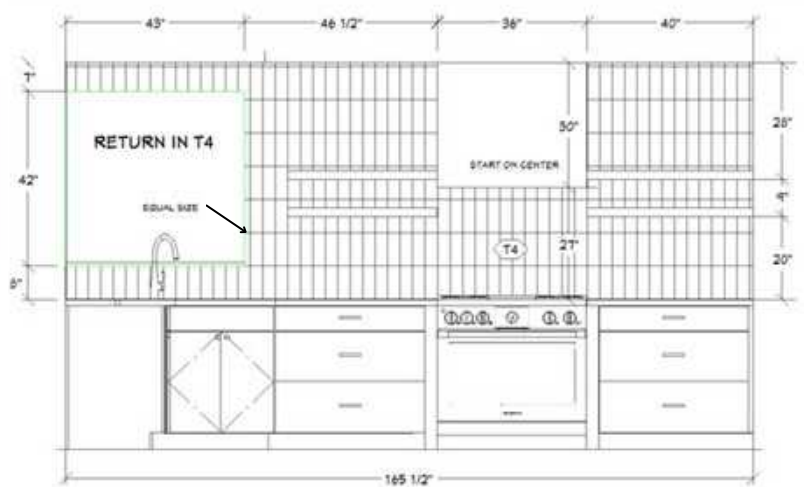
Kitchen



KITCHEN - WEST



KITCHEN - NORTH



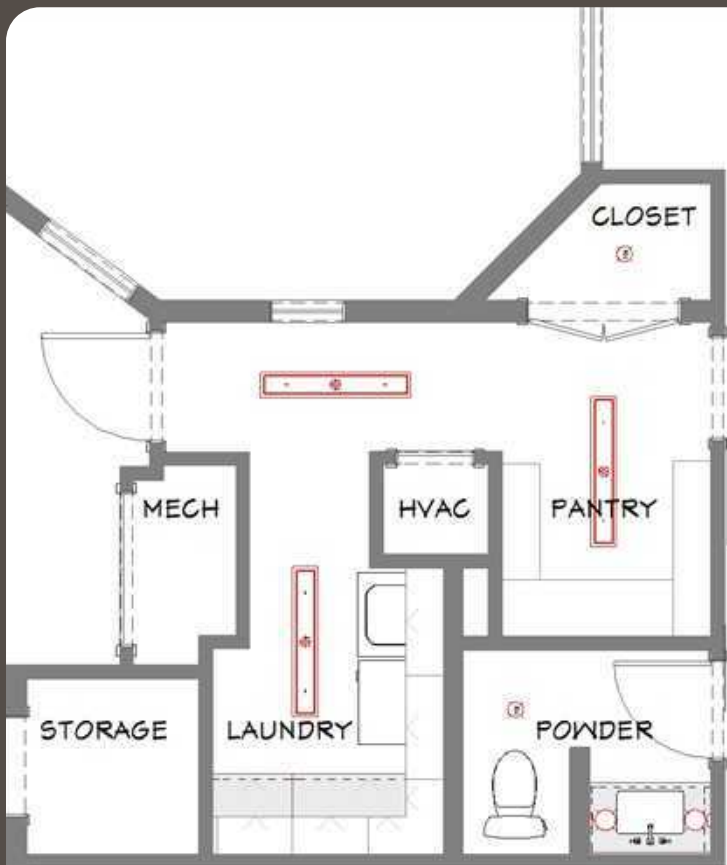
KITCHEN - EAST

Lighting

The original lighting plan did not align with the new, larger island configuration, and the most effective solution for precise recessed placement was the addition of a drywall soffit around the kitchen perimeter.

Integrated 3000K LED strip lighting within the upper cabinets and floating shelves delivers efficient task illumination while accentuating material textures. A reeded glass and matte black linear pendant above the island provides both visual interest and even surface lighting, maintaining an open, unobstructed view through the space.

Utility areas were fitted with low-profile LED panels for consistent brightness, and the powder room features modern sconces flanking the vanity cubby, offering balanced and flattering illumination.



Materials



A: Island Counter – Composite surface selected for its dramatic character and value. The mix of warm and cool tones unifies the overall palette.

B: Perimeter Counter – Light and clean to let the island serve as the focal point.

C: Powder & Bar Counter – Leathered black quartz introduces depth, texture, and contrast.

D: Laminate Cabinet (Kitchen, Bar and Powder) – Dark and moody with a rich tactile texture, adding a sense of rustic sophistication.

E: 3x8 Ceramic Tile (Kitchen) – Glossy white with weathered edges for subtle character, installed in a vertical stack for a modern touch.

F: Laminate Cabinet (Kitchen) – Bold rustic wood pattern that ties into the natural wood ceilings throughout.

G: Cabinet Hardware – Modern and streamlined in matte black for a clean, cohesive finish.

H: 3x12 Ceramic Tile (Powder Room) – Copper and pewter tones with a textured metallic finish add subtle visual interest, bridging the warm and cool elements throughout.

I: Glass Barn Door – Dark wood frame with opaque glass conceals the pantry and hall to the garage while creating a bold, graphic statement on an otherwise simple wall.

J: 24x48 Porcelain Tile – A non-slip surface used throughout the home for safety; the caramel tones connect to the wood ceilings while gray accents introduce a modern touch.

During



At the top of the design team's wish list was removing the large, angled fireplace at the kitchen entrance. Awkwardly placed and unnecessary for Arizona's climate, it consumed valuable space and conflicted with the new layout.

Its structural role in supporting the roof made removal challenging and nearly cost-prohibitive, but the team prioritized design integrity—sacrificing some laundry room storage and toe-kick lighting to make the transformation possible.



During



Adding the drywall soffit around the kitchen perimeter solved multiple functional and aesthetic challenges:

- Balanced material contrast: Reduced the dominance of wood, allowing the cabinetry to terminate cleanly and become a focal feature.
- Improved lighting: Created opportunities to strategically place new LED recessed fixtures for balanced illumination.
- Seamless repair: Concealed the large ceiling opening left by the fireplace removal, as well as smaller voids from solar tubes and speakers.
- Enhanced spatial perception: Drew the eye upward, making the room feel taller and defining a wood tray detail that visually connects to the ceilings throughout.

A simple architectural move that transformed a disjointed ceiling into a cohesive design element that elevates both form and function.



The soffit's size and placement were guided by the space itself, and in the end, replacing the tongue-and-groove ceiling was the only way to achieve a flawless, craftsman-level finish.



Finishing Details



A striking corner window with a showcase view demanded exacting precision in the backsplash layout. Because the adjoining windows were not identical in length, a carefully calculated corner cut ensured perfect symmetry and a seamless finish.

The bright white textured tile with subtle distressing was selected early in the design process to complement the modern desert aesthetic. Installed vertically, it introduced a clean, contemporary rhythm that visually expanded the height of the space.

This early material decision allowed precise alignment from the corner window through to the hood and floating shelves—proving that two strong focal points can coexist harmoniously within one composition.



Finishing Details

The modular cabinet line was selected for its availability and cost efficiency, but its execution demanded a high level of craftsmanship. The floating shelves and vent hood enclosure were meticulously fabricated from full sheets of material, requiring precise cuts and alignment to preserve the integrity of the grain and finish.

Layered depths and a two-tone palette elevated the modular cabinetry to a custom, high-end level. This effect was further enhanced by using full sheets of material to wrap exposed ends, creating a seamless transition and reinforcing the sense of depth.

The detailing was repeated on two walls to establish cohesion and visual balance. The dark textured laminate contrasts beautifully with the rustic wood grain, achieving the balanced modern desert aesthetic that defined the overall design intent.



Conclusion

The project began with a clear mandate: transform a dated, compartmentalized home into a cohesive, market-ready property within an aggressive four-month timeframe and a fixed investment budget. The design challenge extended beyond efficiency—it required balancing cost, craftsmanship, and creativity while maintaining the home's authentic Southwestern character.

Early assessment revealed opportunities to enhance spatial flow, maximize functionality, and create a more contemporary aesthetic appealing to a wider buyer demographic. By integrating design and demolition phases, the team was able to make rapid, informed decisions and adjust to field conditions in real time. Strategic material selections—driven by availability, value, and design integrity—ensured schedule adherence without sacrificing style.

Preserving the original wood doors and ceilings provided a natural link to the home's history, while modernizing other elements created a refined, timeless balance. The reconfiguration of the primary spaces, including the redesign of the fireplace area, established stronger visual alignment and improved circulation. Throughout, warm finishes, tactile textures, and clean modern lines unified the interiors into a cohesive "modern desert" aesthetic that respects the home's roots while meeting contemporary expectations.

The result is a thoughtful renovation that delivers both functional improvement and elevated design—demonstrating that creativity and craftsmanship can thrive even under tight constraints.

Client Feedback

The clients were thrilled with the return on their investment and amazed by the transformation—both in functionality and in the dramatically enhanced aesthetics. Feedback from real estate professionals has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting that the property is positioned to achieve top market value.

"We can't believe it's the same house," the clients shared. "The space feels larger, brighter, and so much more functional than we ever imagined. Every design decision added real value, and the process was seamless from start to finish. We're so pleased with the outcome that we've already decided to continue investing in the Phoenix market."

While this project presented no shortage of challenges and tests of craftsmanship, the result is a home that is both more functional and visually refined—ready to welcome its next family and serve as the backdrop for new memories. The team takes great pride in having delivered the transformation within the defined budget and timeline, despite their inherent constraints.

Thank You!