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LOFTY AMBITIONS

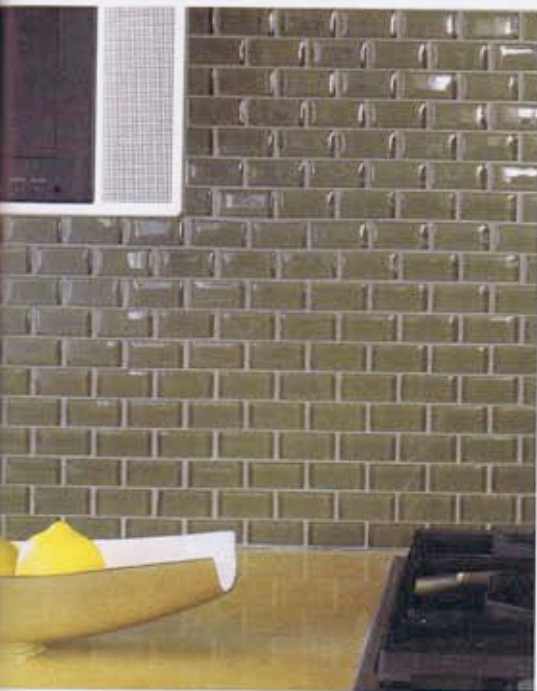
A clever remodel transforms a tight townhome kitchen into an open, loftlike space for a single dad.

WRITER AND FIELD EDITOR ALECIA STEVENS PHOTOGRAPHER KIM CORNELISON

Horizontal lines in the cabinetry wood grain, tile backsplash, and stone ventilation hood helped transform Richard Steele's townhome into a sleek loftlike space.







ABOVE: Polished-glass tiles on the cooktop wall contrast with the natural texture of the stone countertop. **TOP:** Careful coordination of materials in the kitchen and family room gives the space a cohesive look and feel. **OPPOSITE:** A trough sink in the center island serves as a prep sink or an ice bucket during parties.

CHANGE CAN BE EXHILARATING—BUT ALSO DAUNTING.

For Ralph Steele, a Minneapolis physician, the impetus for change was the confluence of midlife, divorce, and his younger son leaving for college. Thoughts of remodeling spurred visits to weekend open houses in the city's trendy warehouse district, and he began imagining what it might be like to trade in his suburban townhome for an urban loft.

"I wanted to entertain again, but my home was dated and a bit of an embarrassment," he says. Carpets were worn, and the kitchen's whitewashed oak cabinets were more cottage than cool. The separate cooking, dining, and living areas were cramped and dark. Something had to change. But before Ralph made the leap to the urban life, he checked in with interior designer Brandi Hagen to discuss his options.

It didn't take long for Hagen to reimagine Ralph's current home as the loftlike, open floor plan he sought. In redesigning a space for a single man with two college-age sons who come and go, the focus was on a modern and masculine look.

In the new plan, two interior kitchen walls were eliminated and replaced with a three-sided island open to the living and dining areas. Housing the main sink and dishwasher, the two-tier island conceals kitchen clutter from the dining area and provides a bar and seating area where guests can gather near the cook.

A second island, this one clad in stainless steel and centered between the larger island and perimeter walls, offers a durable prep area near the cooktop and refrigerator, as well as a trough-style sink, handy when Ralph entertains.



LEFT: Built-in stainless steel appliances complement the floor-to-ceiling cabinetry on the storage wall. **BELOW:** When interior walls came down, the kitchen opened up to the adjacent dining area. **OPPOSITE:** A breakfast nook with banquette seating was built into a window-lined bay.



DUAL SINK SUCCESS

A small prep sink in the center island creates a convenient work triangle with cooktop and refrigerator nearby. Cleanup is managed at the larger sink near the dishwasher.

The streamlined layout gives the space a loft feel, and the materials tie the open rooms together visually. Cumaru wood flooring stretches throughout, and quartersawn white oak cabinets look equally handsome in the kitchen and surrounding the family room fireplace, which was refaced with the same thick stone used for the kitchen's ventilation hood.

"Ralph loved the natural, textural elements of stone and wood," Hagen says. "But for an authentic loft look, industrial materials were also necessary." So she wrapped the center island countertop and breakfast table base in stainless steel and chose cabinetry pulls in the same finish. The color palette is culled straight from a man's closet—gray, khaki, and black—and unites the rooms. Even the ceiling is steel gray.

"The kitchen is fabulous, and I've had nothing but compliments," Ralph says. "I can cook while guests pour themselves a glass of wine at the island. The flow of the room is smooth, and it just functions extraordinarily well." **KBI**

RESOURCES BEGIN ON PAGE 130.

