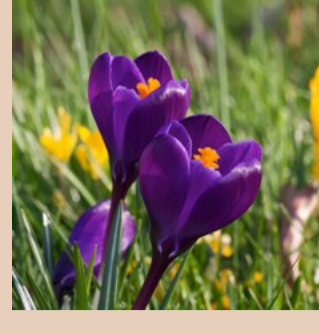


End of Winter !

We wanted to say goodbye to winter during this last week of its existence. Though it wasn't a record-breaking event, it did seem to be long, and it seems everyone is excited to see green plants popping their heads up from the soil, the sun showing its face a bit more, and smiles gracing faces of our friends and families. May this new season bring fresh life to all of us, a fresh outlook, and improved economic news, and a great upcoming season for the Tigers.



- Gary Rochman

Feature Project: Dittmar Kitchen



What a difference a foot makes!

The Dittmars came to us with a common desire - to completely overhaul, update, enlarge and improve their kitchen. Their old space was outdated with a dropped ceiling and fluorescent lighting, cabinets falling apart, and an L-shaped plan that was too narrow to accommodate two cooks, two children, and two rather large dogs. Meal time became a scene from World Wide Wrestling!

Our initial design concepts explored relocating the kitchen elsewhere, reconfiguring the traffic flow, and possibly adding additions. The house had an unusual quad-level layout with the kitchen and kids' bedrooms being on the top and living spaces being one or two levels down. Moving the kitchen or adding significant space was cost prohibitive, so doing the most in its current location was the budget-appropriate design criteria.



The breakthrough concept was to enlarge the kitchen width by moving a wall toward the dining room 12". To compliment this 1 foot movement, we reduced the depth of the pantry cabinets to 18". We have found that 24" deep pantries foster a lot of items getting lost in the back, and 18" works just right. The entrance to the kitchen (upper right photo) now is wide enough to open the refrigerator and access the pantries. A new pass-through on the wall to the dining room adds function and visual connects this hub of the house to adjoining rooms.



Colors and textures were critical to our clients- they wanted to create a bright, cheery space reminiscent of Mexican colors and styling. We fabricated Alder cabinetry for their smooth rustic look, and mixed in a deep blue quartz countertop, yellow walls, and a deep rust colored rustic floor tile in a random pattern. A built-in breakfast booth in the kitchen features

blue fabric and a Maple table. Copious daylight from the new windows and raised ceilings highlight the new space, and create a joyful kitchen space for this family.



(You can find this project on our website under Current Work - Archive - [Kitchen and Dining Remodel: Spruce](#))

Employee Spotlight: Anne Balsillie



With over 20 years in business, RDB has seen employees come and go as their lives intersect with ours. We have had the pleasure of keeping some employees for many years, such as Anne Rae Balsillie who has recently celebrated her 10th anniversary with RDB!

Anne was born in Ann Arbor and has lived in the Whitmore Lake area for most of her life. Anne deeply loves the area and the people. She loves cars, tools, motorcycles, her dog Caley, close family, being at her families cabin up north, and being a Lead Carpenter.

Carpentry and construction are fields with few women. Anne came to RDB ten years ago with little experience but a great attitude to learn and to be part of a team. She apprenticed for many years, became a Staff Carpenter, and advanced to being a Lead Carpenter - running her jobsites entirely. She works with our clients, supervises other carpenters and subcontractors, and is a great finish carpenter in her own right. To be given a chance to build a career in it is something Anne greatly appreciates.

Our clients have loved to have Anne on the project, and regularly remark at her thoroughness, her attention to detail, her near-crazed approach to daily clean up, and her craftsmanship.

"When I started working at RDB, it was just a job," Anne explained. "Over the last ten years, it has become a career. Now I don't want to do anything else."

And we don't want you to do anything else either. Thank you Anne.

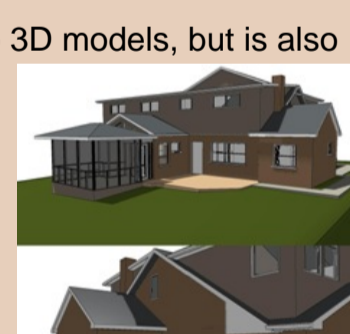
Design Toolbox: 3D CAD Modeling

We at RDB understand the importance of using the right tool for the job. This is equal in design and in construction. One item in our design "toolbox" is the ability to build three-dimensional models. These models allow for easy visualization, walk-throughs, and even material and paint color options. We create these models with two different programs: Sketchup and Softplan.



[SketchUp](#) is a modeling program owned by Google. As its name implies, the models are quick and loose. The software makes it easy to create and sculpt shapes without regard to precise dimensions, allowing a creative flow to be unhindered. It can then be used for exact dimensioning and detailed drawings of complex 3D objects - either a cabinet, a roofline, or a glass to tile intersection. There is a free version available for [download](#) that is one of the most intuitive pieces of software out there. Much like a hammer or saw, it is a tool that can be used by anyone. But in the same vein as giving a saw to skilled carpenter, Sketchup can create great results in the hands of a professional designer.

[Softplan](#) is a more complicated tool. Not only does it do 3D models, but is also our primary drafting tool at RDB. The software is a 'BIM' type, or a Building Informational Modeling. Every object carries with it information beyond simple graphics. A wall is not just lines. It has a height, length, and thickness and is made up of drywall, studs, and siding. Softplan uses this information to build the 3D model as you draw the floor plans. The two are integrated from the start, with changes to one affecting the other. These models are not as quick or flexible as one in SketchUp, but the added integration creates efficiency by reducing repeated steps. This saves time and money while producing a better end project.



Complex three-dimensional modeling is not appropriate for every job. But it is a valuable tool to be used when needed. In the end, the goal of 3D models is the same as hand drawings or hardline floor plans: to help our clients understand their projects better and feel confident that they are getting the project of they hoped for.

What's Cooking!

Renovating a kitchen can be a major disruption. We do our best to help clients through it, including setting up temporary facilities when needed. But we are always open to new ways to make things easier.

This is how we discovered [What's Cooking!](#), a local Ann Arbor meal service. One recent client recommended it to us as being a great help during her kitchen remodel. The service provides fresh, healthy, fully-cooked meals. Delivered to straight to your door, the meals last up to a week and simply need to be heated up and then are ready to eat.

And the service is open to anyone, no remodeling projects required. So when you know you're going to have a busy week grading papers or long hours at the office, think about What's Cooking. This could be the perfect way to still have healthy, home-cooked meal without all the hassle.

Lead Safety in Remodeling

The EPA has instituted new laws regarding lead safe building practices, taking effect on April 22, 2010. While many of these required practices are things RDB already does on our jobs, there are further steps that we will be taking. To prepare, several of our employees have already gone through the required training and have become certified. The rest of our carpenters will get trained in the coming months. We feel that our client safety is at the top of our list, and containing lead dust and disposing of it properly is good for our clients, good for the environment, and follows the law.

For more information about lead safety and the safety during remodeling, please check out [this recent article](#) featuring RDB on AnnArbor.com.