

# hot style savvy

## kitchen currents

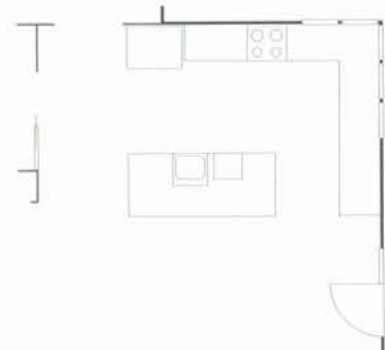
### barrier relief

Views, both to the outdoors and to rooms adjacent to the kitchen, are always an important amenity in residential design. But they were vital to the plan of this kitchen in Jeffersonville, Vt., part of a new house designed for a client who uses a wheelchair. Before starting the project, Stowe, Vt., architect Milford Cushman listened carefully to the owner's candid, thoughtful evaluation of her needs. "I've never had a client who was so willing to be specific about what she wanted," he says. "She wasn't afraid of the opportunity to get involved in the home's design; in fact, she embraced it. She was a fabulous teacher."

One of the insights he gained from their conversations was that accessibility isn't always a matter of being able to physically reach things. Even though his client couldn't do the cooking herself, she still wished to participate visually in kitchen activities. So he left the room open to a family/dining/living space, eliminating doors or any partitions that would block sight lines into the kitchen. Instead of traditional cupboards and pull-out drawers, he lined the walls with open shelves. And he placed a wheelchair-accessible counter below a set of expansive corner windows so that the owner can experience a postcard-perfect view of Vermont's Green Mountains.

Cushman realized that overdesigning for his client and her wheelchair would be just as detrimental as ignoring the issue. "We tried to make sure there was a good balance of space, in the kitchen and throughout the house," he says. "The openings between rooms are slightly wider than usual—just enough so that everyone feels comfortable, but not enough to be very noticeable." The addition of a couple of closed-door cabinets, one above the range hood and one in the base of the hutch, contributes to that sense of scale and balance. He also made sure that the wheelchair can fit through the space between the kitchen's island and the opposite wall, even when the refrigerator door is open. Yet the island sink, the refrigerator, and the cooktop are still in close enough proximity to form a highly efficient work triangle. Cushman's skilled juggling of beauty, accessibility, and functionality has yielded a room that's wonderfully welcoming to all its occupants.

**architect:** Cushman + Beckstrom Architecture and Planning, Stowe, Vt.; **builder/contractor:** Conklin Construction, Morrisville, Vt.; **cabinetmaker:** Don McCormick, Elmore, Vt.; **project size:** 190 square feet; **construction cost:** \$137 a square foot



Stainless steel accents, straightforward molding and millwork, and Prairie-inspired light fixtures all lend this rustic kitchen a Shaker-like simplicity.

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*—milford cushman*



Milford Cushman is a design professional with over 30 years of practice committed to creative and thoughtful design solutions. He is not a registered architect as referred to in this article.

Photos: Carolyn Bates