

A Skylight Cheers

Of all the rooms in this old house, built in 1916, the third-floor bath had the worst layout. The room measured less than 5 ft. wide by 11 ft. long, and the tub was tucked between floor-to-ceiling sidewalls. Getting to the toilet required squeezing through a 14-in.-wide passageway between the tub and the sink.

I wanted to improve circulation and bring some light into this dark, cramped shooting gallery of a bath. The partition walls flanking the bathtub had to go, and I considered replacing the built-in tub with a freestanding claw-foot model. But no one was wild about having a shower curtain as the centerpiece of the bathroom. The only alternative was tucking the tub into the adjacent attic.

I took some measurements and discovered there was just enough headroom under the roof for a tub where a person of average height could shower comfortably (drawing facing page). Compared to the cast-iron alternative, the light-weight acrylic tub chosen for the bath alcove (Ultra Baths, jetless Meridian 55; www.bainultra.com) was considerably easier to carry up three flights of narrow stairs.

Capping the alcove with a skylight went a long way toward brightening the room. Almost as an afterthought, I decided to make the skylight operable, which added more headroom (Velux GPL roof window; www.veluxusa.com). When it's fully open, whoever is in the shower has an unimpeded view of the sunrise over the Oakland Hills. □

Scott Donahue is an architect based in Oakland, Calif. Photos by Charles Miller.

Popping a skylight into a low roof made room for a bath alcove with brilliant sunrise views

BY SCOTT DONAHUE

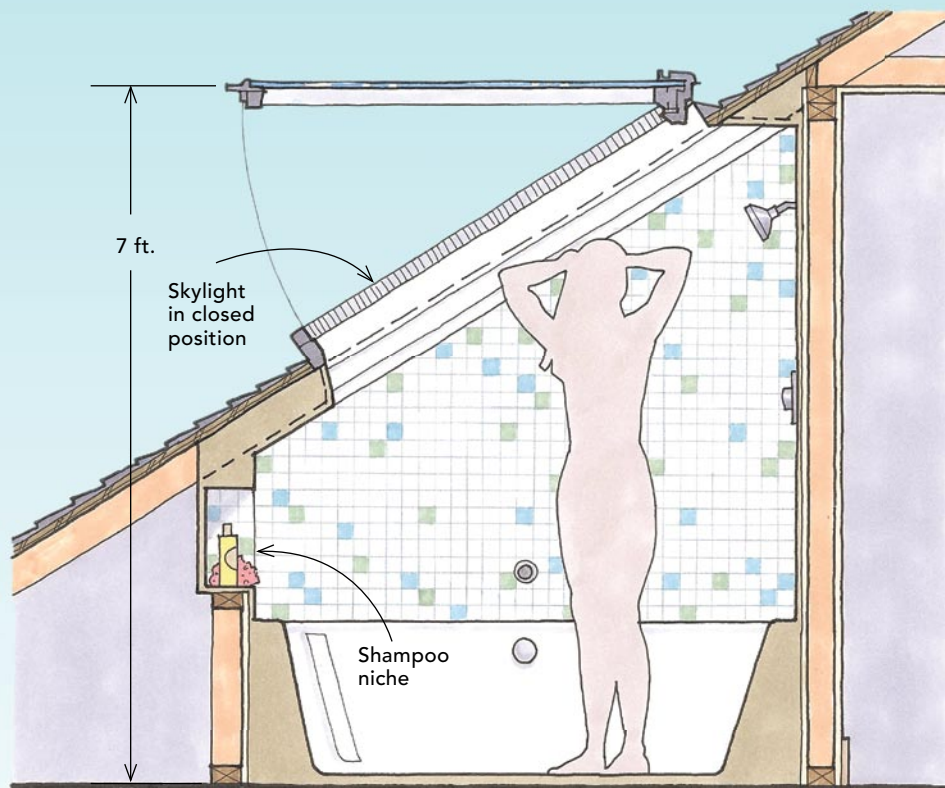


A narrow space gains breathing room. A tapered sink counter and a low privacy wall screening the toilet help to counteract the room's long, narrow plan. The original medicine cabinet and Douglas-fir floors are ready for another 100 years of service.



Up an Attic Bath

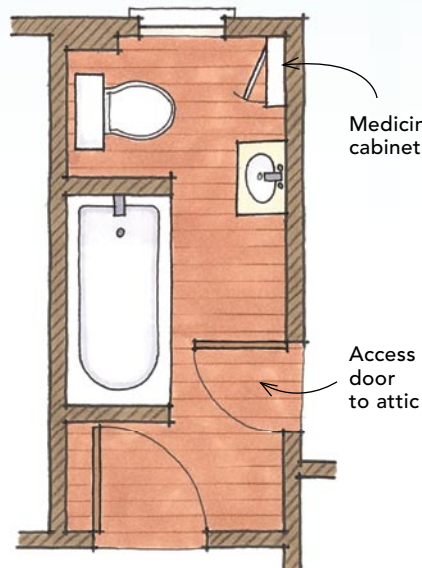
Small expansion, big payoff. Centered between the existing rafters, a 30-in. by 55-in. operable skylight provides ventilation, daylight, and adjustable headroom in this tub/shower alcove tucked into unused attic space. Shelves for towels and a narrow bench made of cedar 2x4s on edge occupy the space between the rim of the tub and the original wall plane. The 2x4s are supported by L-brackets screwed to the wall framing.



BATHED IN LIGHT

Floor-to-ceiling walls flanking the built-in tub made this narrow bathroom seem even smaller, and getting to the loo meant squeezing past the sink. Tucked into the adjacent attic, the new bathtub frees up space for a sink with a wedge-shaped countertop that contributes to the room's open feeling. An operable skylight above the tub maximizes headroom and natural light. Access to attic storage is maintained via a new hatch on a bedroom wall.

Before



After

