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**The Paulus/Dorman family** renovated the kitchen of their Ice House Loft while keeping true to the strong bones of the 100-year-old former Arizona Ice and Cold Storage Co. building. Photo by Logan Havens. See story on page [62](#).

# Heating Up the Ice House

This remodeled kitchen is the perfect place to chill.

By **Elena Acoba** Photography by **Logan Havens**

**E**ven 17 years after its development, the Ice House Lofts still exude a feeling of Tucson housing *cool*. The 50 industrial contemporary lofts that fill the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s buildings of the former Arizona Ice and Cold Storage Co. have held up well.

But every home eventually calls out for some refreshing. That's what architect Rob Paulus and R+R Develop partner Randi Dorman decided to do to the kitchen in the Ice House condo they kept for themselves after developing the project with friends Phil Lipman and Warren Michaels.

"We wanted to freshen up the kitchen with new cabinets and appliances," says Tucson native Paulus, "and really push what could be done with the design and details to create something very functional and beautiful."

The Ice House Lofts project was hailed in 2005 and beyond as Tucson's spectacular entry into true modern loft living. Paulus's designs for the homes (from 700-square-foot studios to 2,200-square-foot two bedroom, two-bath townhomes with loft space) exposed the solid buildings' brick walls, piping and metal beams for a modern-plus-vintage aesthetic. The project appealed to residents drawn to vibrant urban living and a concern for environmentally friendly design and development.

The project won several industry awards, including for Creative Reuse and Rehabilitation from the Sonoran Institute's Building from the Best Awards and an Adaptive Reuse special citation from the American Institute of Architects *Sunset* Western Home Awards.

"Repurposing old buildings is one of the most sustainable things we can do as developers and architects," explains Paulus, who started Rob Paulus Architects in 1995 after working for others in the Los Angeles area and Tucson. "The Ice House Lofts project took an 80-year-old building and gave it another 80 years or more of life while saving thousands of tons of existing materials."



The warm tones of the wood dining table and cherry wood island base contrast with the cooler hues of the white counters and blue back-painted-glass backsplash.



Above: The sleek and efficient kitchen design offers a perfect working triangle layout, minimizing foot travel and maximizing food prep space.  
 Right: Custom cherry wood china cabinets were created by Scott Baker. Beneath, a custom steel rack provides convenient wine storage.

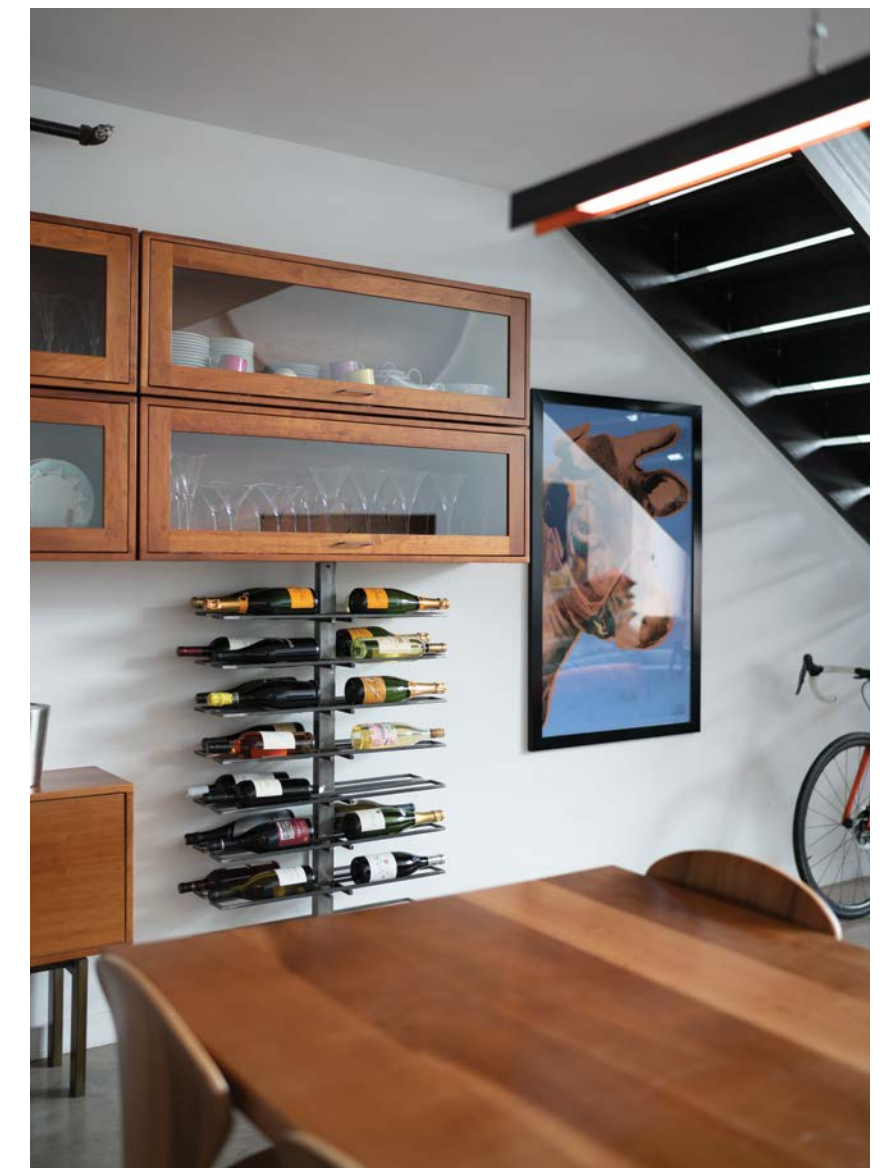
The original kitchen design in the open floor plan was simple and modern. Stainless steel appliances, maple cabinets and black countertops lined the wall farthest from the front entry. A similarly decorated oblong island provided additional storage space and housed the sink and dishwasher.

Paulus and Dorman, who lived in the condo and raised their daughter there, decided more than two years ago to improve the kitchen to make it brighter and have more storage space. They worked with Colin Bruce from Bruce Design + Build LLC to make their designs reality.

The kitchen area sits more than 30 feet from the front entry windows. “Randi’s idea was to make the kitchen all white to literally lighten up the space,” Paulus says. “This worked out great.”

First, a bit of rearranging was in order. The refrigerator was moved to what would become an “L” extension of kitchen cabinets, where previously a single cabinet hung on the wall. A microwave drawer in the new “L” extension replaced the overhead built-in appliance. The original oven was taken out for a built-in induction stove top and separate oven underneath.

Durazo Woodworks built a bank of white-painted cabinets above and under the shiny white quartz counter as well as along the extension. That created visually pleasing straight lines of bright light-reflecting surfaces.



Tempered, back-painted, baby blue glass was mounted on the wall between the counter and the cabinets. Coupled with the white countertops, it boosts light reflection from the far windows and other light sources.

A new island is shorter and wider. Its base is cherry wood except for one side, which sports the same white quartz as the counter. Paulus maximized the island's width and storage by expanding it right up to an original steel floor-to-ceiling column.

This island is full of useful features. A cut-out provides room for three counter stools that can be tucked under the island counter. Also under this part of the counter are LED lights that add interest and illumination, while electrical outlets and USB ports turn this corner into a computer and electronics station.

There's a nook with shelves that hold cookbooks. Another inset holds a paper towel roll. Next to the dishwasher is a roll-out drawer specifically for trash and recyclables.

The island's length was shortened to make way for the "L" extension. New built-in storage was added including a slide-out pantry. The shiny counter and glass back wall complete the corner to this part of the extension.

"It was quite fun to create a concept of modern and simple to counterpoint with the bones of the 1923 building," reflects Paulus. "This might be my favorite type of project, where modern and vintage meet to create an intriguing blend of new and old."

Redoing the kitchen — essentially redesigning his own design — gave Paulus a chance to learn and "see what's possible."

In the ensuing years since the Ice House Lofts were completed, Paulus and his firms have given other old buildings new lives. They converted the Coronado Hotel into apartments, reimagined senior housing into market-rate apartments at One North Fifth (formerly the Martin Luther King Jr. building), and designed a renovation and addition to the Food Conspiracy Co-op's early 20th-century building, where construction will soon start.

Paulus speaks with pride about the Ice House Lofts. "I still love it," he says. "It was our first development project and it showed Tucson what is possible in urban living." **TL**

Right: The open great room floor plan emphasizes flow around the first floor. Art and architecture both pull colors from each other to establish a consistent theme that unifies the two-story loft scheme.

