

Build Smart

CHALLENGES

Widening a Bathroom Doorway

A simple hinge swap provides 2 inches of extra width in a doorway

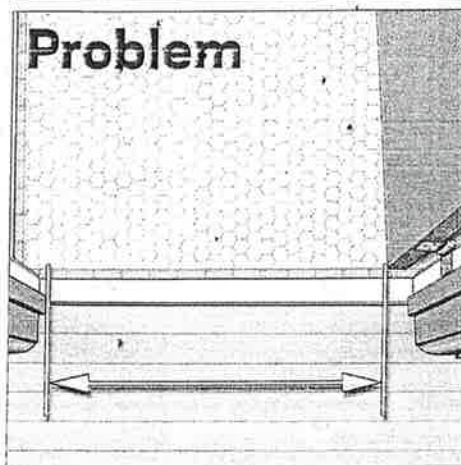
We recently finished a bathroom remodel that included a new curbless shower. We wanted to allow for future use of a walker or wheelchair by widening the doorway, but the existing opening took up all the available space, and there was no way to stretch the budget enough to relocate the wall.

Instead, we used a two-step approach to widen the opening by about 2 inches at very low cost. First, we replaced the existing butt hinges with a set of offset hinges, also known as swing-away or wide-throw hinges, which allowed the door to swing completely out of the opening. Lowe's has offset hinges in several finishes, or you can order them from a specialty supplier of accessibility goods.

With barely more than the 3-inch minimum needed to accommodate the hinge pins, we also framed a small recess in the wall after we'd removed the old drywall. When our tile guy installed the wainscoting, he finished this area like a shower niche, providing space for the doorknob and allowing the door to lie flat against the wall when opened.

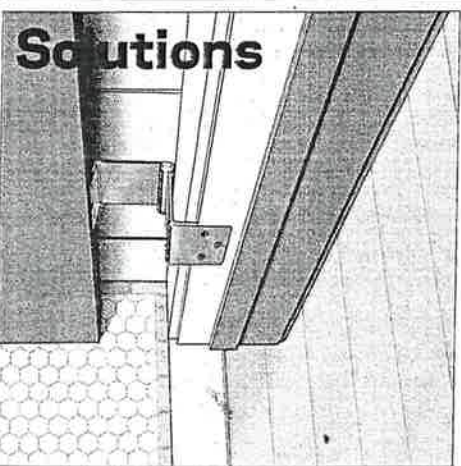
It would be possible to gain another inch of clearance by removing the stop molding on each side of the door to wheelchair height. We left the molding in place for now, but it would be quick and easy to make that change sometime down the road. — ROBERT CRINER

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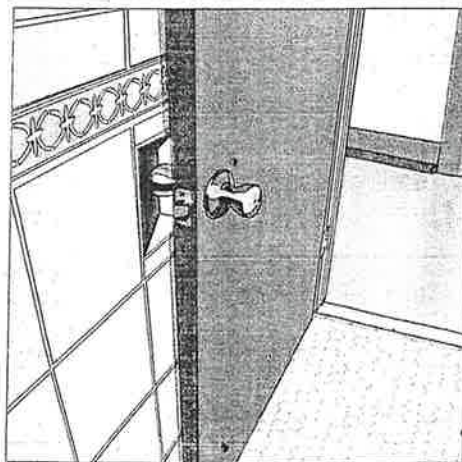
A Standard Butt Door

A partition wall on the hinge side of the existing door limited its swing, reducing the usable width of the opening by nearly 2 inches. Given the tight project budget, moving the partition and reframing the opening to provide more clearance was out of the question.



Swinging Away

Replacing the original butt hinges with a set of inexpensive offset hinges effectively provides a wider opening with no changes to the framing or trim. Even the existing mortises and screw holes remain the same.



Wainscoting

A niche in the tile wainscoting allows the fully opened door to sit flat against the partition wall, leaving the width of the original doorway completely unobstructed.