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## INTERIOR DESIGN

# Welcoming the Sun

NEW ADDITION PROVIDES EXTRA ROOM FOR FAMILY  
BY TROY BLEWETT

After living in their Annandale home for more than 40 years, these retired homeowners felt it was time for a change. So they put together a list of goals and priorities for a remodel.

"We're the original owners of the home and empty-nesters now," one of the owners says, "but our daughter and three grandchildren live nearby, and we're the primary gathering place for the extended family."

"Over the years, I had realized that we were not using

our back deck much and that our dining room was too small for entertaining," she says. "I also wanted a better view of our lovely backyard...but wasn't sure what could be done."

Enlarging the dining room had always been a priority for the couple, but because of set-back requirements on the home's rear elevation, they were unsure about the feasibility of any large-scale modification. To learn of their options, they turned to Sonny Nazemian, president

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of Michael Nash Design & Homes, who had remodeled their kitchen several years ago.

“Once we assessed the site issues, we were able to devise a plan that met the homeowners’ needs,” Nazemian says. “A sunroom off the back integrated into a redesigned, open floor plan met a lot of their goals for the renovation. We were able to eliminate walls between the living room and dining room to open up sightlines. And we saw that a vaulted ceiling would make the rear elevation feel substantially larger,” he says.

The biggest challenge was the home’s existing rear elevation, which held the bearing wall for the entire second floor. To make the remodel work, Nazemian and his team had to install a horizontal support beam balanced on vertical supports between the first and second floors.

Because the home’s main living space is several feet above grade, excavating the foundation for the new wing created a space-planning bonus. By enlarging the founda-

tion, the Michael Nash team created a cavity under the addition itself to house the additional HVAC system needed for cooling and heating the new space.

The larger task, however, was forming a new interior that would accommodate a 12’ x 40’ sunroom with a 15’ ceiling, and 30 feet of running window wall crowned by glass-facing arches.

“The structural issue was daunting,” Nazemian recalls. “The sunroom would be the featured component in a completely open plan. To eliminate the rear bearing wall without relying on a middle post, the support beam



**Before**

Above: “Before” and “after” views of the new dining room.

Opposite: “Before” and “after” views of the rear deck.



Before



would have to span a distance of 30 feet from one side of the room to the other.”

To accomplish this, Nazemian specified an industrial-grade I-beam attached to similarly calibrated vertical beams. The vertical supports are concealed behind opposite walls on either side of the open space. This is the component—entirely out of view—which now holds up the second floor.

“We’re presenting an unusually wide and open area that incorporates almost half of the rear elevation,” Nazemian says. “The lack of visible support is the defining effect of the new space.”

The homeowner agrees. “As you enter the house from the front, your eye moves out and up into an expanding horizon. It almost like an optical illusion, yet a very dramatic effect.”

Meanwhile, with double French doors and side lights on opposite elevations, the addition provides ready access to a pair of well-articulated outdoor places: a new Trex-clad grilling deck on the west side; a flagstone patio with water feature on the east. From here, pebble-strewn

walking trails meander past forsythias, hostas and old-growth holly trees.

Inside, natural light abounds in all directions. Saffron-hued walls complement pearl-stained crown molding and off-white trim. To tie the space visually, the original oak flooring was replaced with maple.

“This is a great spot to relax and take-in the garden—but every gathering place in the new plan has its own identity and a degree of privacy,” the homeowner says..

“Effective zoning is the key to an open plan,” Nazemian adds. “An open continuum needs to be scaled so it breaks down any appearance of excess volume. To accomplish this, we consider variances in ceiling height, evaluate the shape and placement of windows and built-ins, or point to the best spot for couches, tables and serving stations.”

“The idea is to invite the eye to explore, highlighting gathering places and focal points within a panorama,” he adds. “In this way, a comparatively small space becomes varied and exciting.”

The results speak for themselves. “My family just

*Above: The larger task, now completed, was forming a new interior that would accommodate a 12' x 40' sunroom with a 15' ceiling, and 30 feet of running window wall crowned by glass-facing arches.*

*Opposite: Two views of the finished addition: “This is a great spot to relax and take-in the garden—but every gathering place in the new plan has its own identity and a degree of privacy,” the homeowner says.*



loves the improvements,” the homeowner stresses. “There are plenty of places where you can sit quietly and relax, but also a very dynamic environment for playing together. We’re particularly pleased at how well the changes suit out current needs,” she says.

Additionally, the project won a Washington-area “Contractor of the Year” Grand award (COTY) for Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes. It was named “best addition under \$100,000” by the metro DC chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

In accepting the prize, Nazemian was quick to acknowledge his company’s high-performance design team, which grappled with several site and structural challenges.

“Developing a plan that fully utilizes overlooked space enlargement possibilities is our strong suit,” Nazemian said. “As a firm, we concentrate on achieving large improvements in functionality and design while adding comparatively little square footage. Our mission is always to expand what is possible within a budget by focusing the investment where it counts.”



*“The COTY award is about outperforming the limits of a budget. We collaborate closely with our clients to achieve cost benefits by exploring creative solutions that will maximize the investment. A COTY always tells me we’re doing our job well.”*

*—Sonny Nazemian*