

Universal design solution converts Springfield colonial into couple's elegant retirement home

■ Plan by Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes perfectly accommodates occupants of any age

BY JOHN BYRD
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX
COUNTY TIMES

Fred and Liz Saalfeld had occupied their four-bedroom, 2,800-square-foot Colonial in Springfield for nearly 50 years when an unexpected event caused them to reconsider their basic housing needs. Without warning, Liz suffered a heart attack. Her mobility, which had previously been hampered by arthritis, now became seriously compromised. Looking ahead, creating wheelchair-access throughout much of the house seemed to be a prudent move to Fred, who also periodically relies on a pair of canes to get around.

"Our house had not been designed for people of our age with looming mobility challenges," Fred Saalfeld recalls. "It was beginning to look like we would have to consider moving - but before taking that step, I wanted some ideas on ways we might retrofit the house to better suit our foreseeable needs."

On the surface, this was a tall order. The master bedroom was on the second floor; the laundry room in the basement (which also accommodated a larder for household goods). There was an open carport, but no extra stor-



PHOTOS BY MITRO HOOD

The Saalfelds added a wheel-chair friendly master suite to the four-bedroom colonial in Springfield they had occupied for over 50 years. The 1,200-square-foot addition extends directly from the old rear elevation into a formerly hilly backyard.

age space. The master bathroom was too cramped and narrow for wheelchair access - assuming there was a way to mount the stairs.

On a personal note, the surrounding landscaping was undeveloped, with a steep hill in the back yard. There were places to sit, but no quiet spots to rest, enjoy the sunshine, and watch the flowers grow.

Acting decisively, Saalfeld began seeking ideas from local remodelers. Eventually, he received four bids, but soon decided on Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes,

the firm that had remodeled the family's kitchen ten years before.

"Their all-under-one-roof services - which combine design and construction with an enormous showroom full of finish work options - was the deciding factor," Saalfeld says. "The company had really evolved since we worked with them a decade earlier. Plus, they were very responsive to our situation, and really understood Aging-In-Place considerations."

Part of that responsiveness entailed the direct involvement of Sonny Nazemian, Michael Nash's founder and president, a Univer-

sal Design Certified Remodeler (UDCR) who commenced drafting out design ideas with the Saalfelds on the very first meeting.

"Aging-in-place solutions are rapidly becoming one of the high-demand sectors of the remodeling industry," Nazemian says. "But a contractor's training and knowledge are critical. It's a specialty area which requires staying on top of always evolving ADA (American with Disabilities Act) regulations, and strict building codes. The art of delivering a winning outcome for older homeowners

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The flagstone patio immediately outside the master bedroom is linked to a network of walkways that segues to a gazebo, an herb garden and an exercise area for the family Irish Setter. Owner Fred Saalfeld, who walks with the aid of two canes, says the remodeling changes have created a major quality of life improvement.



BEFORE The home's existing backyard ascended at a 20-degree angle from the rear door. To install the concrete base needed for the new addition, remodeling Michael Nash had to remove and re-compact approximately six tons of dirt.

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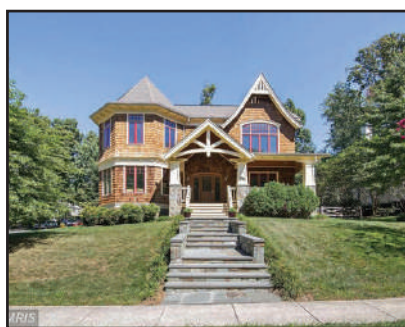
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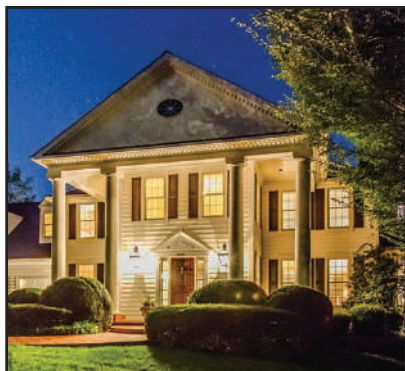
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With a pair of walk-in wardrobe closets on the left, and access to a first level laundry and master bedroom on the right, the access corridor from the main house is well-conceived and spacious. The French doors open into the dining room. Michael Nash matched the original hardwood flooring to create a seamless unity between the old house and the new addition.



The louvered door on the right is for the family's Irish setter, who exercises in the side yard. All doors are at least 32 inches wide and have a 90-degree clearing width.

HOMES

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with A-I-P (Aging-in-Place) requirements consists of mastering design ideas that normalize a special needs environment. That's one of the reasons that we proposed a universal design solution for Fred and Liz. They anticipated the need for rooms large enough to maneuver a wheelchair, but they also wanted an aesthetically and functionally improved living space."

"While the plan certainly meets our needs, the interesting thing is it would work fine for anyone from nine to 90. The master suite, for instance, could be turned into a family room if needed," says Saalfeld.

From the outset, Nazemian and team envisioned an addition extending directly from the rear elevation into the backyard. The couple would have much larger sleeping quarters and each spouse would have their own walk-in closet. The master bathroom suite would be "wheelchair-friendly" with a bench in the shower, grab-bars and hand-held body spray

nozzles. It was also decided to allocate space for a first-level laundry room. Liz would no longer have to trudge to the basement and back with a basket full of clothes. The new addition would be 1,200 square feet with a 14-foot cathedral ceiling, lots of natural light and double French doors that segue to a flagstone patio.

The rub, however, was the backyard terrain that ascended at a 20-degree angle from the home's rear door. To create the 28-by-42 footprint needed for the new addition, Nazemian would have to excavate down three feet from the existing surface, remove six metric tons of earth and plant a grove of Tocks shrubbery and several trees to achieve the necessary compaction.

To keep water runoff under control (a long standing problem), the contractor introduced a French drain and swell linked to an infiltration trench.

"There can be a surprisingly tricky set of engineering requirements in working around uneven terrain," Nazemian says. "A lot of contractors won't take on challenges like this, because the building code on compaction issues is

quite strict."

With the foundation feasibility issues resolved, however, attention turned to the new addition's space plan and design. Exterior brick cladding was expertly matched to the home's original masonry, creating a seamless enlargement of the existing house. Interior floors were, likewise, milled and finished to flawlessly blend with the hardwood floors in the existing structure.

"The style and look is very consistent throughout," Saalfeld observes. "It's very much one house."

To insure lots of natural light and comfort, Nazemian specified low-E, double Argon-filled glass for all windows including a pair of double French doors that lead to the patio. A smaller, louvered door was created for the family's Irish setter who exercises in a side yard.

A new split-system HVAC

unit was installed to provide the new addition with dedicated heat and air control. The solution proved to be a significant money-saver, since it concentrates temperature requirements in rooms where the couple spends most of their time.

At 200 square feet, the master bathroom is a masterpiece of efficiency and warmth. The door from the bedroom is 32 inches wide with a 90 degree swing radius as required by the ADA regulations, yet the interior design is soft and earthy, with porcelain tiling offset by walnut cabinet facings and a granite-topped vanity.

To satisfy additional storage

needs, Michael Nash closed-in the garages and added new closets and cubbies.

Best yet, a series of well-defined walkways link garden focal points with a mid-yard gazebo. Surrounded by a privacy fence, the grounds are a nicely protected Eden, perfect for quiet enjoyment.

For information call (703) 641-9800 or email MichaelNash-Kitchens.com

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Well-defined walkways and a circumscribing privacy fence make it easy for an elderly couple to enjoy their many distinctive garden spaces.



The shower is equipped with grab-bars, a bench and hand-held nozzles - all of which Fred uses in his daily bathing routine.

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