

## Higher expectation drives home additions market

■ Design innovations that satisfy a broad personal agenda are the primary creative challenge today

By JOHN BYRD  
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

Veteran remodeler Sonny Nazemian, founder and CEO of Michael Nash Design Build and Homes, sums up the re-emerging home additions market with two words: higher expectations.

"There's a perceived need for bigger houses that runs throughout the Northern Virginia market," he says. "Newly built homes are bigger — they're 500 to 1,000 square feet larger than they were 20 years ago. And that affects the remodeling market, where the demand for additions and pop-ups is on the rise again."

In fact, the 30-year-old company which boasts a sprawling Lee Highway showroom initially specialized in interior design, plus kitchen and bath remodeling — until the market dictated otherwise.

"In the mid-1990s, we were lured into larger-scale projects by our customers," Nazemian says. "They didn't want just a kitchen makeover; they wanted a kitchen addition — plus a new family room. So we became custom home remodelers mainly to satisfy existing customers."

That said, the demand for innovative solutions is stronger than ever.

"The size of the addition is nowhere near as important as how effectively it satisfies the homeowner's range of personal needs," Nazemian says. "Developing ideas that will meet a broad owner agenda is what inspires us creatively. We're especially pleased

with how much value we can provide within a budget."

Case in point, a McLean family was grappling with an increasingly busy household consisting of two pre-schoolers, a home-based business, plus frequent visits by elderly parents and out-of-town guests.

Mom's "office" was the dining room table — which made entertaining cumbersome. But, more importantly, her work space offered limited sightlines to an enclosed rear porch where otherwise-unsupervised children had most of their toys.

"We were looking for a plan that offered better use of the main level living area — where we spend 90% of our time," the homeowner, a mother of two, explains. "I also wanted dedicated guest quarters and an exercise room. The problem was: we didn't know what was feasible, so the solution proposed by Michael Nash was a revelation. And they did all the work with their own people"

What the homeowners sought were focused changes that would add square footage, sharply improve room access and circulation, and improve visual continuum and natural light availability.

Among key elements: create an appreciably open primary living area floor plan; design rear lower level space for guest quarters and an exercise facility; sharply improve visual linkage to the family room from both the kitchen and dining room; reconfigure the kitchen, dining room and family room into a better integrated whole. Finally, since the existing back yard offered little more than a precipitous downward slope, the entire household yearned for an outdoor family play area that was level, self-contained and visually linked to the home's rear rooms.

"Our idea was to square-off the rear elevation with a two-story rear addition," explains project de-



A cathedral ceiling, skylights, side elevation windows and a double French door assure the remade interior is generously bathed in daylight. New and refurbished all-wood flooring lends visual unity to an appreciably open floor plan, yet carefully selected wall colors help to differentiate the primary components of the reconfigured space. New built-ins designed to match an existing bookcase are finely detailed and evenly rationalized.

signer Shawn Nazemian.

The addition's footprint extends the existing concrete foundation mat and rear elevation bearing wall. The new lower level — which now includes dedicated guest quarters and exercise room — features a spacious side window and a rear slider that walks out at grade level.

On the level above, the Nash team removed large portions of the original bearing wall, shifting loads to newly installed steel I-beams positioned to provide structural sup-

port to the second floor and roof. The reconfigured family room now spans the entire rear of the house.

The dining room and family room are now linked by a generous archway; the kitchen has been, similarly, opened up on the rear, with sections of the original brick back wall preserved as a half wall granite-topped serving counter and breakfast bar.

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"The look and feel is fabulous," the homeowner adds. "We couldn't be more satisfied."

Out back, the plan called for a two-level deck designed to provide a multi-zoned indoor/outdoor continuum. Constructed of composite planking in a deep red tone, the tree-shaded space is both restful and uplifting. A two-step height variance differentiates the grilling deck from the lower zone set aside for outdoor dining.

### Small addition, big improvement

Meanwhile, a few miles away in Springfield, homeowner Ed Button wanted to greatly improve the efficiency and aesthetics of the family kitchen with a minimal increase in new square footage

"We were hoping that small, focused changes would make a difference in our enjoyment of the house," Button explains.

The original Springfield, Va. Colonial-style residence had featured an upper-level, L-shaped kitchen that faithfully followed the first floor footprint. It was adequate, but failed to be generous.

"We like to entertain. We wanted better circulation, and better dining and food serving options," the homeowner adds.

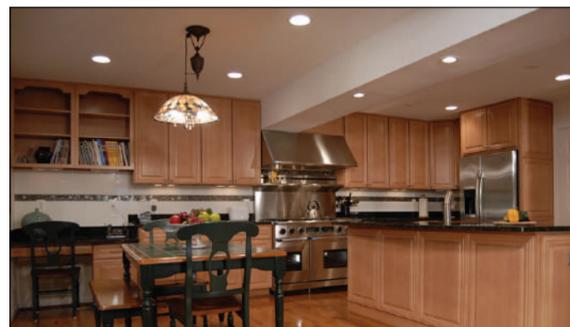
Button had sought remodeling bids from five firms before choosing Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes of Fairfax, whose principal — Sonny Nazemian — designed the project.

"The changes really came together in Michael Nash's showroom," Button recalls. "Everything was at our fingertips."

By extending the kitchen a few feet and squaring-off the rear elevation, the home's "L" was converted to a "rectangle."

"The room is just 140 square feet larger, yet gains usable space," designer Nazemian points out.

Central to the new floor plan is



Central to the new floor plan is a granite-surfaced food preparation island (right) complete with clean-up sink, dishwasher, and added storage. Integral to the chef's "work triangle," the island is a convenient mid-way point for traffic in all directions, a space divider, and an all-purpose utility.

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**HOMES**

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a granite-surfaced food preparation island complete with clean-up sink, dishwasher, added storage. Integral to the chef's "work triangle", the island is a convenient mid-way point for traffic in all directions, a space divider, and an all-purpose utility.

The island offers access to the breakfast table, yet is close to the family laptop, the built-ins designed for cookbooks, the family room, the sun porch...

To enhance value to rear living spaces, Michael Nash removed selected interior walls, establishing visual continuum between the kitchen, family room and sunroom, as well as from the rear elevation to the tree-shaded back yard.

A new granite-topped waist-high counter offers added kitchen storage, functioning as a room divider/ serving station to the family room. Unified by white walls and hardwood floors, the generously open area boasts privacy zones within a space that invites easy circulation.

Aesthetically, the make-over presents a warm ambiance comprised of light-hued natural wood cabinet facings and floors contrasted with dark-granite surfaces. Rear window walls keep the



PHOTOS COURTESY HOME FRONTS NEWS

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rooms light-filled, visually linked to nature. An embossed metal grape vine motif running along the backsplash is just one of the design details highlighting the bu-

colic indoor-outdoor connection.

For information, call (703) 641-9800 or go to MichaelNash-Kitchens.com

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ing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached at (703) 715-8006, www.Home-FrontsNews.com or byrdmatx@gmail.com.

**Equity stacked-homeowner wealth on the rise**

Homes in markets across the nation have regained value since the recession, affording homeowners the ability to accumulate wealth through equity, also known as "equity stacking."

Two recent reports confirm the trend - one, from S&P/ CoreLogic, and the other by ATTOM Data Solutions, owner of RealtyTrac.

Homeowner wealth, according to S&P, has more than doubled since 2011, expanding on a national scale to \$12.7 trillion from \$6.1 trillion, in tandem with the 40 percent boost in the value of single-family housing. For the Average Joe next door, \$12.7 trillion breaks down to an average \$11,000 - or \$30,000 if he lives in California, Oregon or Washington (West Coast... shocking!) The upward momentum in equity, S&P cites, has positive economic implications, as well: more than \$100 billion in consumer spending, which includes investing in home improvements.

The distribution of homeowners who are "equity rich," as ATTOM defines - those with a loan-to-value ratio of 50 percent or less - has grown to 13.1 million, or roughly one-quarter of the homeowner population in the U.S. The distribution of homeowners who are "seriously underwater," at the same time, has gone down to 6 million - a far cry from the 2012 peak of 12.8 million.

Why are more homeowners joining the "one percent" of equity rich? They're extending their stay, says Daren Blomquist, senior vice president at ATTOM.

"Close to one in every five U.S. homeowners with a mortgage is now equity rich thanks to a combination of ris-

ing home prices and lengthening homeownership tenures," Blomquist says. "Median home prices increased on a year-over-year basis for the 18th consecutive quarter in Q3 2016, and homeowners who sold in the third quarter had owned their home an average of 7.94 years - a new high in our data and substantially higher than the average homeownership tenure of 4.26 years pre-recession. As homeowners stay in their homes longer before moving up, they are amassing more home equity wealth."

The equity rich, according to ATTOM's report, are concentrated on - hold your breath - the West Coast, in Honolulu (39.3 percent), San Francisco (49.8 percent) and San Jose (55.7 percent). In San Fran and San Jose, the amount of equity rich residents has gone up over 10 percent in the last year.

Dual forces, as indicated in both the S&P and ATTOM reports, are at work here. The on-going trend toward recovering prices, and activity in the market to match, are making more homeowners "equity stacked."

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