

Clarendon townhouse renovation is 'Contractor of the Year' winner

■ Michael Nash solution named Washington-area's 'Best Entire House Remodel Under \$250,000'

BY JOHN BYRD
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A whole house makeover to a three-level townhouse in the Clarendon section of Arlington has won a Washington-area "Contractor of the Year" (COTY) award for Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes. The design solution – in which all three levels of a 23-year-old townhome were selectively reconfigured and upgraded – was executed in the home of Michael Oraz and Suzanne Korow. The project has been named "Best Entire House Remodel Under \$250,000" by the Metro D.C. chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

In accepting the prize, Michael Nash president and founder Sonny Nazemian credited his company's innovative design culture – which contended with difficult space planning and interior design challenges while staying entirely within envelope of 1,700-square-foot structure.

"A solution that aims for an actual increase in usable space in a townhouse is particularly problematic," Nazemian noted. "You can re-configure what's in the footprint, but the parameters never change. To gain usable space, you have to re-assess the entire 'built environment,' figure out what can be re-located or reduced; where a custom built-in might add spatial efficiencies. It's a form of value-engineering that's been critical to this remodeling practice."

For Oraz and Korow, plans began years ago with a simple assessment of goals and priorities.

"When we adopted our daughter some years ago, we decided that this townhouse would be our home long into the future," Oraz says. "Improving floor plan efficiency and storage options were high on the list. But we also wanted better lighting, aging-in-place considerations and a transitional-style interior design. The goal was to create the impression of a larger, more fluidly interactive space – without adding on."

Early on, the couple began researching interior ideas online – while keeping an eye out for a building professional who got their vision.

"Once we discovered the Michael Nash showroom, the path forward became easier," Oraz recalls. "There was a significant display of finish work ideas at our disposal; the designers gave us many relevant insights whenever we asked, but we could browse at will, and visit often. Also, we were attracted to his fixed price policy."

An early phase focused on what remodelers call "discovery." An example of this is assessing existing systems and how well they function, or don't.

"When you're staying inside the envelope of the home, inches count," Nazemian observes. "We looked closely at how key rooms were built out, and found a lot of misallocated space, and the consequences of that."

- For instance:
- The wall separating the living room from the stairwell made the living room seem smaller, not more private.
 - The boxed Bay window in the living room incorporated an elevated ledge that was hollow underneath.
 - Ceiling flush bulk heading in the kitchen serving no purpose, yet restricted cabinet height.
 - A second-level powder room configured as a square need-



Revealing and refurbishing wood flooring helps to visually unify the open room which extends from the front to the back of the 1,700-square-foot townhouse. The use of recessed and pendant lighting contributes further to this effect. The old wood burning fireplace with brick hearth was converted to gas fireplace embedded in a floor-to-ceiling "stacked stone" back wall. Existing built-in bookcases on either side of the fireplace were retained; a built-in bench was added under the box bay window area.



PHOTOS BY JUNE STANICH

Renovations to a three-level town house recently won Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes a "Contractor of the Year" (COTY) award for the Washington area's "best entire house remodel under \$250,000." To gain kitchen floor space, designers removed a pantry, relocated the refrigerator, reconfigured a power room and re-routed plumbing. The room's centerpiece is a custom-designed 6-by-4 food preparation island and dining counter with three stools.

lessly reduced kitchen floor space.

- A linen closet in the master bedroom absorbed nine square feet of floor space.
- The front foyer had room for a grandfather clock and old cabinet, but no place to hang a coat.

"You learn early on that most production houses are like a movie set," Nazemian says. "There are built-in effects that have no purpose except to convey an image about a lifestyle. What we try to do is help the homeowner make the house their own – to see it as a place that will serve their needs and express their personal tastes."

To make the changes sought by Oraz and Korow, Nazemian and team found ways to incrementally increase needed floor space while simultaneously introducing discrete storage solutions, and increasing natural light and visual continuum.

"Necessity drives innovation," Nazemian says. "Here we selec-

tively reconfigured small rooms; replacing production house cabinetry with custom built-ins where useful... introducing design elements that would make the space feel larger."

The bigger task, however, was forming a new interior from top-to-bottom that would make better use of three components:

Third-level private rooms that incorporated a master suite, a second full bath and the daughter's bedroom;

A second-level primary living area that included a rear-facing galley kitchen, a powder room, a dining zone and a front-facing parlor;

A first-level consisting of a foyer, a hall with closet and a rear recreation room that exits to a back garden.

To introduce an open plan on the second level, designers deleted a partition with pass-through situated between the kitchen and a formal dining area. This allowed more natural light and visual con-

tinuum from front to back.

To gain kitchen floor space, the team removed a pantry, relocated the refrigerator to the newly surfaced east wall and changed a corner of the perfectly square powder room to a diagonal.

Deleting unnecessary bulk heading allowed for taller cabinets. Roll-out shelving for spices was a handy space-saver. There are custom cubbies for favorite pots, dishes and glassware.

The room's centerpiece, though, is a 6-by-4 food preparation island and dining counter. Surfaced in exotic tones, the built-in offers convenient support for cooking and clean-up; it's also a place for in-kitchen dining furnished with three comfortable stools.

With the partition removed, the next step was giving visual definition to the great room. The wood burning fireplace with brick-facing mantle was replaced with

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BEFORE: Removing the partition with a pass-through added 21 square feet of floor space to the open plan.



Serving station (existing)



The remodeler refurbished the first-level family room. French doors, recessed lights, and cherry wood flooring are among the upgrades. Accent wall coloring enlivens the space. The built-in desk accommodates home office needs.



Relocating a 3-by-3 linen closet from the master bedroom to the master bath freed up floor space needed for the couple's wardrobe system, but also proved to be a sensible convenience.

RENOVATION

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a gas-burning unit embedded in floor-to-ceiling stacked stone back wall. Existing built-ins (a serving station and china cabinet; television console) were retained to good effect. The elevated ledge inside the boxed bay window was replaced with a three component window seat.

"The whole level feels substantially larger," Orazz says. "Eliminating the stairwell enclosure expanded sight lines. Removing the ledge inside the box window accomplished the same effect. There's much more natural light everywhere."

Upstairs, two goals prevailed. The first being a more appealing, spatially-efficient master suite with vastly increased storage capacity, and the second was a similar solution for daughter Andrea's quarters.

Given the importance of inches, it was soon learned that the space-gobbling 3-by-3 linen closet could be relocated to a niche in the master bedroom that offered nothing except a recess for a towel rack.

With new bedroom floor space available, Nazamian and team designed a multi-component wardrobe system that neatly occupies the bedroom's inside wall. Following close consultation regarding needs, the remodeler integrated a precisely specified modular system with custom built-ins. "His" and "hers" closets with Shaker-style doors accommodate everything on hangers. But there are also



BEFORE: In the master suite, the closets were dysfunctional and limited.

two built-in bureaus, shelves for pull-out wicker baskets, and personal items behind frosted glass doors.

"We must have gained a 40 percent increase in storage capacity," Orazz says. "It's been transformational." A similar solution implemented in Andrea's room has resulted in a far tidier environment.

And both upstairs bathrooms have been upgraded from top to bottom.

"We wanted very warm, earthy look," Orazz says. "The shower is almost 40 square feet with lots of features. It's very relaxing."

On the first level, the family explored personal aesthetics in a series of practical decisions. A mudroom at the entrance provides dedicated storage for personal items as well as a bench for changing shoes, coat hooks and overhead shelves.

The hall floor re-tiled in linear porcelain ceramic segues to a

rear recreation room that accesses a back garden.

Here, a bright Cherry Wood floor has been installed, replacing a worn carpet. New accent wall coloring enlivens the room. Also, a built-in desk accommodates the family's home office needs.

"This part of the house works really well as a casual entertainment zone, but it's also a useful place for study," Orazz says.

Summarizing, he adds: "Overall, we're getting a lot more out of the house; more than I had hoped for. The designers gave us helpful guidance that delivered a very good value for our investment. We're pleased."

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

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A multi-component wardrobe system neatly occupies the master bedroom's inside wall. After assessing requirements, the remodeler integrated a precisely specified modular system with custom built-ins. "His" and "hers" closets, a pair of built-in bureaus, and shelves for pull-out wicker baskets are among the space-saving solutions.

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Gardeners get ready



FILE PHOTO

It's gardening time.

■ Green Spring Gardens plant shop re-opens April 8

BY TIMES STAFF

Just in time for spring planting, the Garden Gate Plant Shop at Green Spring Gardens reopens on April 8.

From 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., local residents can treat their green thumbs to a shopping spree. They can choose from the latest selection of shrubs, native plants, wildflowers, ornamental grasses and unusual perennials and annuals. Many of the plants in the shop can be found in Green Spring's gardens. Others are carefully chosen by staff horticulturists.

Green Spring Master Gardeners will be available in the morning to answer any gardening questions. Friends of Green Spring (FROGS) receive 10 percent off in the plant shop.

Green Spring Gardens is located at 4603 Green Spring Rd. in the Fairfax County portion of Alexandria. For more information, call 703-642-5173 or visit online.