

HOMES

The Townhouse... fully realized

■ **Master designer/remodeler Sonny Nazemian reveals practices that are making local townhomes more spacious, attractive and comfortable**

By JOHN BYRD
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

"Increasing usable living space in a town home is tricky, especially when there are structural issues," remodeler Sonny Nazemian observes. "On the other hand, owners are adapting them to personal requirements more than ever. It's really a kind of revolution."

Nazemian should know, as founder and CEO of Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes Nazemian and team have renovated hundred of town homes throughout northern Virginia, often winning kudos from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, the National Association of Home Builders and Qualified Remodeler Magazine, which sponsors the coveted Chrysalis award.

"Homeowner expectation of what is possible in a town home has risen dramatically in the last 15 years of so," Nazemian adds. "We've become very adept at introducing open plans, augmenting storage capacity and helping the owner find an interior design style that satisfies both functional goals and aesthetic interests. In many ways, townhouse renovation is one of the real frontiers in the local market."



PHOTO BY GREG HADLEY

Michael Nash Kitchens and Homes grappled with structural challenges that included strategies for removing a bearing wall in the center level of a three-floor townhouse. The precisely-articulated solution addresses a long list of requirements for a family of four.

Clarendon

Whole house makeover will accommodate Longterm Needs

"We decided that this townhouse would be our long-term home when we adopted our daughter some years ago," Michael Orazz says. "Improving floorplan 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 a more fluidly interactive space--without adding on."

Early on, Orazz and wife Suzanne Korow began researching interior ideas-- while keeping an eye out for a building professional who got their vision.

"Once we discovered the Michael Nash showroom, the path became easier," Orazz recalls. "Finishwork ideas were at our fingertips; the designers gave us relevant insights whenever we asked-- but we could browse at will. Also, we were attracted to the fixed price policy."

An early phase focused on what remodelers call "discovery": i.e., assessing existing systems and how well they function,

or don't.

"A tradition production house is a bit like a movie set," Nazemian says. "A lot of what you see is designed-in to convey a lifestyle image, but the home may not be as functional as you want. We help homeowners make the house their own-- re-make it into a place that will serve needs and express personal tastes."

To execute changes sought by Orazz and Korow, the design team concentrated on finding more usable floor space within the envelop of the existing structure. Discrete storage solutions, more natural light and more vi-

sual continuum were also part of the program.

"We reconfigured several small rooms selectively," Nazemian says, "replacing generic cabinetry with custom built-ins while introducing design elements that would make the space feel larger."

But the bigger task was top-to-bottom modifications that would make better use of three components:

- A primary living area on the second level that included a rear-facing galley kitchen, a powder room, a dining zone and a front-facing parlor;
- Top floor sleeping quarters incorporating a master suite, second full bath and the daughter's bedroom;
- A first level consisting mainly of foyer, hall with closet, and rear recreation room that segues to a back garden.

To develop a more functional second level, designers deleted a kitchen-to-dining room pass-through, increasing natural light and front-to-back visual continuum.

To gain floor space, designers removed a pantry, relocated the refrigerator and changed the corner of the perfectly square powder room into a diagonal.

Deleting unnecessary bulk heading allowed for taller cabinets. Roll-out shelving for spices is a handy space saver. The room's centerpiece, though, is a **4ft x 6ft food preparation island** and dining counter. Surfaced in exotic stones, 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.

Next step: introduce more cohesive interior design in the great room.

A wood burning fireplace with brick-facing mantle was replaced with a gas-burning unit embedded in floor-to-ceiling stacked stone back wall. The elevated ledge inside the boxed bay window was replaced with a three component window seat."

Upstairs, two goals prevailed: 1) a more space-efficient master suite; 2) a similar solution for daughter's quarters.

Given the importance of inches, designers created a niche in the master bath for a 3' x 3' linen closet, freeing up bedroom floor space. The team then designed a multi-component wardrobe system that neatly occupies the bedroom's inside wall.

"His" and "her" closets with Shaker-style doors now accommodate everything on hangers. But there are also two built-in bureaus, and shelves for pull-out wicker baskets,

The first level foyer now provides storage for personal items as well as bench for changing shoes, coat hooks, overhead shelves. The re-tiled hall floor segues to a rear recreation room that accesses a back garden.

Here a bright cherry wood floor and accent wall coloring enliven the room. A built-in desk supports home office needs.

"Overall, we're getting a lot more out of our house," Orazz says. "The designers gave us helpful guidance that delivered a very good value. We're pleased."

Mosaic District

Open plan with transitional-style interior design

Christina Gee and Ryan Watkins, owners of a 17 year old year

See HOMES PAGE B-5

Fairfax City Living

Farrcroft Beauty



List Price

\$999,000

Street Address

3863 Lewiston Place
Fairfax City VA 22030

Property Type

Townhouse that lives like a single family home

MLS #:

FC1004687

Bedrooms:

4-6

Bathrooms:

5

Year Built:

2002

Lot Size:

5,000 sf home

Location:

Farrcroft

ten foot ceilings

brick construction

front and back patios plus balcony

two new HVAC systems

hardwood flooring

main level den/bedroom and bath

au-pair/in-law suite on lower level



Jefferson Realty Group, Inc.

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HOMES

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old town home in Merrifield's Mosaic district, began their search for improvements almost three years ago with a simple assessment of priorities.

"The house is appropriately-size for our family, and the easy commute to work," Watkins says. "Our goal was to make better use of existing space. We wanted functional improvements, but also a comfortable in-kitchen dining area and a warm, distinctive interior design."

Early on, the couple began researching ideas-- always keeping an eye-out for the building professional who got their vision

Turned out the Michael Nash showroom was only a few miles away. Gee and Watkins pored over the extensive displays, but were also attracted to the firm's fixed price policy."

"Two other contractors wouldn't commit to a fixed price because of the structural change we wanted" Ryan recalls. "A friend had told me that the lack of a fixed price contract on his kitchen upgrade several years ago ended up coming in at 20% higher than the original quote... so we were pleased with the cost transparency we were offered."

"Effectively managing our client's budget has always been a critical part of our process," Sonny Nazemian adds. "We offer a portfolio of finishwork options at-cost, but we also only use our own workers, and our design team stays ahead of trends."

After closely assessing Gee and Watkins existing plan Nazemian identified several problem areas. For instance--

- A comparatively small part of the kitchen allocated as a "family room" contradicted the larger call for an open, kitchen-centric floorplan where everyone could get involved in cooking;
- The wall separating the kitchen from the dining room/ living

room blocked the flow of natural light from the rear of the house to the living room in the front, making both rooms feel smaller

- Ceiling-flush bulk heading in the kitchen wasn't necessary and severely restricted cabinet height;
- Because the second level lacked front-to-back visual continuum, it didn't work well when entertaining.

To introduce an "open" plan in the middle of a three level townhouse, designers deleted a bearing wall between the kitchen and a formal dining area, insinuating an I-beam supported by concealed vertical shafts to bear the weight of the floors above.

The "opening" made way for a counter surface and three seat dining counter that faces in towards the kitchen. The counter is especially well situated for clean-up and service but is also a convenient dining and gathering spot.

Better yet, the change invites more natural light and front-to-back visual continuum.

To gain kitchen floor space, the team removed a pantry and oven stack, and relocated the refrigerator to the newly surfaced south wall.

On a similar note, eliminating unnecessary bulk heading allowed for taller cabinets and custom "cubbies". Roll-out shelving, in turn, proved out as an intelligent space-saver.

Upshot: the built-in efficiencies make the room feel larger. Because of the two counter-height surfaces the whole family can simultaneously participate in kitchen duties.

Gee and Watkins were also conscientious in pursuing their finishwork choices. The couple visited four or five granite shops recommended by designer Oliver Nazemian, eventually choosing a "river rock" granite they specified for two surfaces in the kitchen and a new fireplace surround.

To keep the shine down, the river rock has been "leathered."

THE TOP TEN SALES IN FAIRFAX COUNTY



MCLEAN

1641 LA SALLE AVE,
MCLEAN, VA 22102
\$840,000
4 bed, 3 bath



MCLEAN

3941 DUMBARTON ST,
MCLEAN, VA 22101
\$3,150,000
5 bed, 6 bath



VIENNA

1110 PEKAY ST SW,
VIENNA, VA 22180
\$600,000
4 bed, 3 bath



VIENNA

8407 TYSONS TRACE CT,
VIENNA, VA 22182
\$1,145,000
4 bed, 5 bath



RESTON

2307 WHITETAIL CT,
RESTON, VA 20191
\$430,000
4 bed, 2 bath



RESTON

1486 WATERFRONT RD,
RESTON, VA 20194
\$1,350,000
5 bed, 4 bath



FAIRFAX

3820 HILL ST,
FAIRFAX, VA 22030
\$525,000
3 bed, 2 bath



FAIRFAX

5730 WALCOTT AVE,
FAIRFAX, VA 22030
\$1,050,000
5 bed, 5 bath



CENTREVILLE

5403 SEQUOIA FARMS DR,
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120
\$520,000
4 bed, 3 bath



CENTREVILLE

15019 STARRY NIGHT LN,
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120
\$1,100,000
4 bed, 4 bath

Overall, the couple explored a range of offsetting colors and textures that would make the room lively, yet balanced.

"We had always appreciated the natural beauty of the rocks we had seen in Hawaii when we were first married," Watkins recalls. "The dark granite reminded us of this, and the warm wood tones are a perfect complement. Also, the curved wood of the Kichler Grandbank chandelier provides an effective mid-room element."

For information: 703 641-9800, or MichaelNashKitchen.com

John Byrd has been writing about home improvement for 30 years. He can be reached @ 703/715-8006, www.HomeFrontsNews.com or byrdmatx@gmail.com. Send photos of interesting remodeling projects to: b2b@homefrontsnews.com

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Wednesday, February 14 at 3 pm
Plus, join us again at 7 pm for our Valentine's Day Dance.

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Home sales and starts increased in November

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Existing-home sales and new home starts both increased considerably in November, according to information released by the National Association of Realtors and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Home sales reached their strongest pace in more than a decade with a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5.81 million in November, according to an NAR statement released December 20. This is an impressive 5.6 percent leap compared to October and is 3.8 percent higher than in November 2016.

The last time existing-home sales were this high was before the recession: In December 2006, sales reached 6.42 million.

Home building efforts also achieved notable gains. According to data released by the Census Bureau on December 19, housing starts were up 3.3 percent compared to October, at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.3 million. This is a year-over-year leap of 12.9 percent. Of these starts, 930,000 were for single-family homes.

Additionally, single-family building permits increased 1.4 percent to 850,000 units. This is the largest number of building permits for single-family homes approved in a single month since August 2007, Reuters reported.

Percentage of cash buyers increases

A notable shift in homebuying trends is the increase of cash buyers, NAR reported. All-cash

sales comprised 22 percent of all home purchases, compared to 20 percent in October. This suggests that the homes sold were in higher pricing brackets, which has more available supply than homes at lower price points.

"The odds of closing on a home are much better at the upper end of the market, where inventory conditions continue to be markedly better," NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun stated in a press release.

As for more moderately priced homes, supply still remains a challenge. Total housing inventory fell 7.2 percent in November to 1.67 million, a 3.4-month supply at the current sales pace. By comparison, November 2016 left off with a 4-month supply of 1.85 million homes.

Yun noted that the increase of cash buyers may be harming first-time buyers' abilities to become homeowners. As all-cash sales increase, supply goes down and prices go up: Two discouraging trends for hopeful homebuyers.

Yun also predicted that increasing wages among young professionals will spark more interest in purchasing a home, and supply of affordable housing may become one of their biggest obstacles. The uptick in single-family building permits is promising, as is the increase in building confidence as reported by the National Association of Home Builders. The Housing Market Index increased five points for single-family home construction to 74 in December, the highest level since July 1999, according to a press release from NAHB. However, Yun stressed

that this confidence and the building permits must translate to tangible supply growth for it to benefit the home buying market.

Cash buyers and a lack of supply aren't the only factors affecting affordability. The Federal Reserve's recent decision to increase the federal funds rate to a range of 1.25 to 1.5 percent may also create affordability challenges among prospective buyers. The move may not have a major impact on mortgage rates immediately, but Yun noted that consumers can expect upticks in 2018.

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Contact Javen House or Kim House for more information:

Javen House
javen.house@gmail.com
703-201-3388

Kim House
kim.house@LNE.com
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Solution time: 21 mins.

Answers

King Crossword