

HOMES

Page B-4

FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

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Mainstreaming the lower level

■ How master designer/remodeler Sonny Nazemian converts unfinished basements into the homeowner's favorite place to entertain

BY JOHN BYRD
SPECIAL TO THE FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

It is remarkable what can now be done with the part of your house that is partially below grade. There was a time when the basement was out of the picture entirely, except as kind of a holding tank for a boiler room that may have also included the laundry.

Guests were never shown this forlorn space, let alone a guest accommodation that would be theirs to enjoy for the duration of their stay. By the mid 1960s, one was more accustomed to seeing "finished basements," but these were hardly a showplace, and more of an out-of-the-way spot where the kids could watch TV.

What a difference a couple of decades of evolving ideas on how to best use home makes. Consider, for instance, the 2,000-square-foot lower-level entertainment suite and guest quarters competed by Michael Nash Kitchen and Homes earlier this year. The comprehensive open floor plan's solution includes a beautifully articulated bar and refreshments area, a home theater, a family fitness center, and a spacious guest quarters with a dedicated master bath.

Better yet, each activity area is zoned for maximum privacy.

"We're finding that the lower level is increasingly in-play as a primary part of the house," says Michael Nash president and founder Sonny Nazemian. "Many owners are now making the lower level their primary family entertainment locale, which means remodelers are called on to provide the engineering and interior design skill needed to convert a usually challenging space into the most home's attractive and comfortable rooms."

For the Lindardakis family, the remodeling process began last year with a simple assessment of goals and priorities.

"We purchased the house with the unfinished lower level, before our first child was born," says Angelo. "As the children grew - they are now nine, six and four - I knew it was time to convert the lower level into a place the entire family could enjoy. We had lot of ideas, but no clarity about how to put it all together."

A news article about a Michael Nash project, however, followed by a visit to their Lee Highway showroom, soon started the research process.

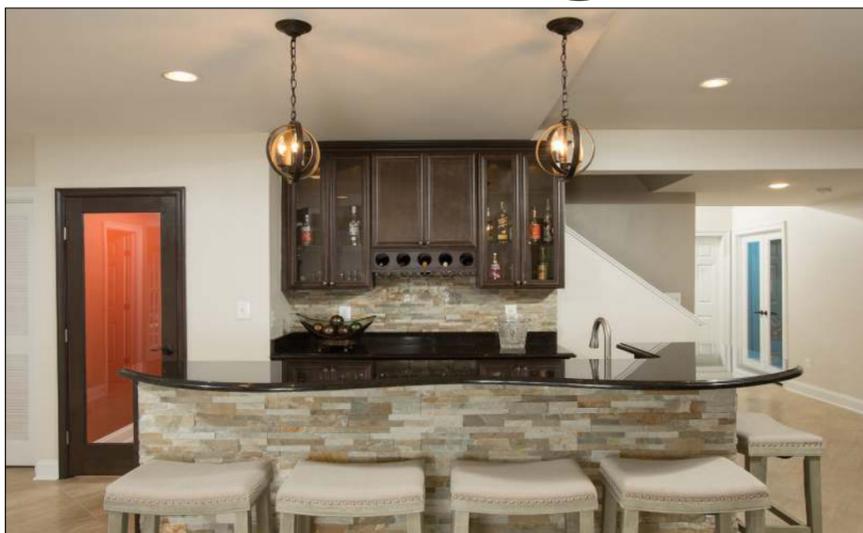
"The showroom is comprehensive," Angelo recalls. "I was getting a lot of ideas by just walking around. Then one of the designers began sketching out a floor plan almost as soon as I asked for input. Before I left, I had an estimate based on cost-per-square foot which I found quite reasonable. I didn't look elsewhere after that."

However, the core problem with re-doing the lower level was structural: the two upper floors were supported by beams attached to solid steel vertical supports which were situated in the middle of spaces the owners wanted to convert into an open floor plan.

To make the proposed build-out feasible, Nazemian and team would have to insinuate a 30-foot horizontal support beam balanced on new vertical supports flanked to either side of the nearly 800-square-foot open area. Two of the existing support beams were then eliminated.

With the structural requirements resolved, attention turned to the satellite private-use components - exercise studio, home theater and guest quarters - and to developing an interior design scheme that would work for the whole.

"The only source of natu-



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

To create a bar countertop large enough to accommodate five, designers at Michael Nash fabricated a kidney-shaped surface top out of black galaxy granite. The backsplash and counter base are faced with Golden Honey ledgerstone. Flooring is almond-colored porcelain tile set in diagonal pattern. Pendant lights from the Equinox collection have an antique bronze finish.

ral light in the lower level came from a course of windows on the west-facing rear elevation which looked out into the backyard," Nazemian says.

"When a lack of available light is an issue, we have found that interior design that emphasizes lighter, neutral colors and textures can generate a great deal of warmth in rooms that are appreciably below grade. This is partly psychological, yet enormously effective; the very essence of what good interior design requires."

These goals in mind, 150 square feet on the west side of the new staircase was designated for a bar and refreshments area. As a zoning solution, the bar is within easy reach of a corner spot designated for a fireplace and TV viewing zone, and a few steps from space near the windows allocated for Foosball, ping pong and other games.

To set the tone for the interior design scheme, Nazemian and team designed an eye-catching counter space and back bar that percolates with soft tones and textures.

The backsplash and counter base are faced with Golden Honey ledgerstone. Almond-colored porcelain flooring tiles are laid out diagonally.

To form a bar countertop large enough to accommodate five, Micheal Nash designers fabricated a kidney-shaped surface out of black galaxy granite.

Overhead, pendant lights with an antique bronze finish provide a golden glow.

The suite's ceiling and walls are off-white, but the wall on the inside staircase is taupe. Throughout, a subtle, checker-board interplay of lights and darks softens the angularity of bulkheads; support posts paneled in duotone wood facings are, likewise, capped with crown molding.

The ledgerstone motif is repeated in the media viewing zone where a five-foot linear fireplace parallel to a flat screen TV presents a striking postmodern image.

In all, the primary gathering concourse is over 1,000 square feet - enough for gatherings of 80 to 100, Angelo says.

But the suite also provides well-differentiated accommodations for quieter pursuits, and in these aims the plan succeeds admirably, as follows:

Home theater: turn left at the bottom of the stairway and left again, and one comes to a pair of double French doors that access a 15'-by-14' home theater featuring an HD projector screen and six reclining leather chairs on two tiers raked for optimal viewing.

In addition to playing movies, the HD projector screen is hooked up to a video gaming station and Amazon TV. Borrowing appropriate interior design detail, the black ceiling, burgundy walls and white pilasters adorned with period lighting sconces evoke a classic pre-1930s movie house ambiance, yet the room is thoroughly sound proofed.

Exercise area: immediately across the hall a second pair of French doors open into an exer-

cise salon complete with an elliptical bike, treadmill, bench press and bar bells. A wall-sized mirror on the outside wall provides visual means to track work-out progress. The rubber floor absorbs sound.

Guest quarters: Situated away from of entertainment zones, a 13'-by-12' guest quarter offers an en suite full bath. An egress window added to satisfy

Fairfax County code requirements provides a pleasant view of the backyard; a useful addendum for a large family with out of town relatives.

Looking back, Angelo Linardakis is particularly pleased with the "flexible process" engineered by Michael Nash, saying:

"His approach allowed us to move forward quickly, while making some adjustments without



To accommodate six reclining leather chairs, Michael Nash designed a tiered floor for the home theater. In addition to playing movies, the HD projector screen is hooked up to a video gaming station and Amazon TV.

extra costs," he says. "We are now considering building out a dedicated wine storage room, and adding a grilling area just outside the new lower level. It all makes good sense for us at this stage in our lives."

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

Kitchens.com

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THE TOP TEN SALES IN FAIRFAX COUNTY



MCLEAN

1602 HOLLY CT,
MCLEAN, VA 22101
\$830,000
4 bed, 3 bath



MCLEAN

1318 ROCKLAND TER,
MCLEAN, VA 22101
\$3,301,385
5 bed, 5 bath



VIENNA

9421 TALISMAN DR,
VIENNA, VA 22182
\$765,000
4 bed, 3 bath



VIENNA

600 BLACKSTONE TER NW,
VIENNA, VA 22180
\$1,350,000
5 bed, 4 bath



RESTON

12338 COLERAINE CT,
RESTON, VA 20191
\$500,000
4 bed, 2 bath



RESTON

1751 DRESSAGE DR,
RESTON, VA 20190
\$795,000
4 bed, 3 bath



FAIRFAX

4021 BARBOUR DR,
FAIRFAX, VA 22030
\$425,000
4 bed, 2 bath



FAIRFAX

9137 SANTAYANA DR,
FAIRFAX, VA 22031
\$745,000
4 bed, 3 bath



CENTREVILLE

14516 AWBREY PATENT DR,
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120
\$449,900
3 bed, 2 bath



CENTREVILLE

6208 SECRET HOLLOW LN,
CENTREVILLE, VA 20120
\$670,000
5 bed, 3 bath

End-of-Year Tax Tips

The year is coming to an end, which means it'll soon be time to file your taxes. Employers must have W-2s delivered to workers by Jan. 31, which gives you about three and a half months to file your taxes.

Though your deadline might seem like it's ages away, the holidays and New Year will fly by quickly. Plus, many experts agree: It's better to get your taxes done sooner rather than later as a means to protect against tax return fraud.

Scammers attempt identity theft early on in the season, TurboTax pointed out. The best way to deter their efforts? Beat them to the punch; if you've already filed your tax return, no one else can do so in your name.

Whether you're one to file your taxes as soon as possible, or you're a procrastinator who'll wait till mid-April to complete this task, it's best to approach tax season with some strategy. Here are tax tips that could help you maximize your return:

Be charitable

It's the giving season, and you likely have already heard at least one request for donations, whether it's someone ringing a

bell outside your favorite store or a cause you've contributed to in the past sending out its end-of-year appeal.

Giving back to a cause you care about is good to do in general, but it can also benefit you in the new year. To ensure you can write off your charitable donation, the IRS suggests you take these steps:

1. Choose a qualified organization.
2. Keep records of the donation: a bank statement, payroll deduction or receipt will do.
3. Itemize your deductions in Section A on Form 1040.

Focus on retirement

Set aside as much as you can in your 401(k) or IRA account. These are tax-deferred, so as long as you don't incur any penalties (such as by withdrawing cash too early), you won't pay taxes on these funds until you begin using the money during retirement.

How much can you legally contribute to your retirement accounts? According to the IRS, you can set aside: •\$18,000 if you have a 401(k).

- \$24,000 if you're 50 years old or older and have a 401(k).
- \$5,500 if you have an IRA.

•\$6,500 if you're 50 years old or older and have an IRA.

Review your housing expenditures

Did you buy, refinance or renovate your home in 2017? If so, be sure you're making the most of your investment. Here are a few ways your homeowner-ship can help you maximize your tax return:

Mortgage interest deduction

For most homeowners, this is the single biggest boost to their tax return, U.S. News & World Report noted. Fill out Form 1098, which your lender should provide, with the amount you paid in 2017.

Property tax deduction

To find out how much you've paid in property taxes this year, check the Form 1098 from your lender if you pay your taxes through an escrow account. If you pay your property taxes directly to the municipality instead, check

your records or your statements from your bank or lender.

Home improvement projects

These not only increase the value of your home, but can also increase your tax refund. Some eligible projects include adding a home office to your abode and improving your home's energy efficiency through features like solar panels.

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