



Fall 2015
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Evolution of a Family Home

BY JOHN BYRD

Starting in the late 1990s, Paul and Laurie Carter began transforming a simple production house into a personal residence.

Collaborating closely with Sun Design Remodeling, the Carters nursed their vision of an exceptional property with a stunning indoor-outdoor continuum.

This past September, the public was invited to see the results.

Paul and Laurie Carter purchased a new production house in a new neighborhood not far from Mount Vernon. At 3,700 square feet, it was a perfect spot to settle down and raise their son. The schools nearby were excellent; the house was just a few miles from Old Town Alexandria. But there were some things about the property Carters thought they might improve — if they were to stay in residence long enough.

Cramped master bathroom; no family play area; dark rear rooms with no visual continuum; cabinet-cluttered kitchen; builder-grade finishes ... Just a few of the perceived shortcomings.

But skip ahead almost two decades, and the whole house remodel that the public was invited to see this past September demonstrates the kinds of improvements and upgrades that can occur when owners continue to occupy, modifying the environment to suit evolving interests.

In fact: it's no longer merely a house. It's

the Carter's long-term residence.

"The ideal of long term ownership is the option to create a home that, over time, becomes more supportive of favored activities and aesthetic preferences," says Bob Gallagher, Sun Design Remodeling's Executive Vice President. "We are finding this kind of on-going commitment to personalizing a residence much more frequently than in decades past."

Gallagher was at the house Sept. 12 to greet neighbors who wanted to learn more about remodeling in phases. Sun Design had guided the Carters throughout nearly every revision over the past decade.

The Carters are quick to acknowledge that their periodic home remodeling efforts have been a logical and sequential response to family needs — beginning with an 18-foot-by-36-foot swimming pool installed on their quarter acre lot in 2006.

"We wanted a place where Paul, our son, Austin, and I could enjoy pleasant summers together as a family," recalls Laurie. "Our remodeling changes reflect the different stages of our lives, and the lifestyle options we wanted to pursue in day-to-day living."

As Austin's circle of friends expanded, for instance, the Carters hired Sun Design Remodeling to convert the home's unfinished lower level into a spacious family room and fitness center complete with a billiards table and TV viewing area suitable for guests of all generations.

During this same time period, Paul and Laurie, both working professionals, sought improvements to the second floor master suite, introducing a sizable master bath with a walk-in shower and changing vestibule. The plan was designed so that one partner could shower, dress and slip off to work without rousing the other partner, who might be still sleeping.

"The new master suite made life more comfortable for both of us," Laurie says, "and it still works beautifully today."

More recently, when Austin left for college, the Carters, now empty nesters, began considering ways to better integrate the home's rear



The Carters purchased the original production house in 1998 and have steadily made focused improvements and upgrades.

suite of rooms with its lovely poolside setting.

The landscaping and mature trees confer a lot of backyard privacy, so the Carters were looking for graceful ideas to better integrate indoor and outdoor horizons. "It made no sense not to have a better view and more natural light from the back of the house," she said. "Also, we didn't have a comfortable outdoor dining zone."

Unchanged since the late 1990s, the three rooms on the west-facing rear elevation consisted of a central kitchen flanked by a formal dining room to the right and a family room to the left.

The dining room was sequestered from the kitchen by a floor-to-ceiling wall festooned with builder-grade cabinets. There was one small window above the kitchen sink which was, likewise, bordered by cabinets on two sides. To the left, one entered the family room, which provided an exit to a rear veranda partially covered by a shed roof.

"We had talked about a more open floor plan," Laurie recalls. "But how do you tear down the walls that are holding up the cabinets you use every day?"

As it turned out, this was a good question for Sun Design's Jeremy Fleming, who supervised the Carter's most recent remodeling. "Once the Carters were satisfied that the wall between the kitchen and dining room could come down," he adds, "it was clear that innovative storage solutions would make it possible to further develop a special visual continuum from inside the house."

To improve natural light, the small kitchen window has been replaced with a three-part glazing solution consisting of a 45-inch picture window flanked by two double hung

windows.

To provide for outdoor dining, Fleming extended the rear shed roof over the previously sun exposed decking. The former outdoor dining niche now becomes a viewing area adjacent to a recently installed flat screen TV. With the addition of two overhead rotating fans, the new outdoor space is both intimately connected to the house and visually linked to the pool and well-landscaped setting.

"We couldn't be more pleased with how well the house has evolved over the years," says Laurie. "We look forward to living here long into the future."

John Byrd has been writing about home improvement topics for 30 years. See more stories at www.HomeFrontsNews.com.



Sun Design's Jeremy Fleming extended the shed roof for shade. Rotating fans make the new outdoor space comfortable.

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A sizable master bath with a walk-in shower and changing vestibule was designed so that one partner could shower, dress and slip off to work without rousing the other still-sleeping partner.

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BOWA kitchen renovation in Arlington features under-counter microwave and beverage center.



BOWA basement renovation includes space for arts & crafts, games and media.

Remodeling Design in 2015: It's all about the Family

Adapting your home so it tracks your family's development over the years.

BY JOSHUA BAKER
BOWA

Almost every luxury remodel starts with the same question "How can we improve our family's life at home?" But this answer varies as our families grow, age and evolve. And the best designs consider both current and future needs.

For young families, the focus is almost always child-centric. Kitchens are designed with low drawers for easy access to the most important items, like sippy cups and napkins. Refrigerator drawers installed as beverage stations and below-the-counter microwaves allow the "vertically challenged" to help themselves. Study areas are incorporated into family spaces to allow for parent-child interaction at homework time.

Creative storage solutions and child-friendly finishes, like washable wall paint, chalkboard paint in play areas, and custom ceramic tiles featuring kids' artwork in their bath, all lend to a successful design.

In the teen years, the question asked most often is, "How do I create the house where all the kids and their friends want to hang out?" For this age group, creative basement remodels with game areas are most popular, and perhaps not surprisingly, basement bars are often minimized or omitted completely. As opposed to the closed-off theaters of the past, media viewing rooms are now open and designed as multi-purpose spaces that also facilitate informal gatherings and entertaining. For the ambitious, outdoor features, such as pools, patios and fire pits, can create a neighborhood destination. (Though pools and water features are of-

ten delayed until kids are old enough to be safe around water.)

Teen-friendly designs often include a family foyer, an entrance from the garage with plenty of storage for sports equipment, coats, backpacks, etc. Other potential opportunities for teens include creating small, fun spaces like lofts in bedrooms, themed bedrooms, and making sure that there are plenty of USB charging stations.

For empty nesters, remodeling typically involves "downsizing" within the home by planning to use the space more efficiently. Often, one-level living is designed for convenience and to reduce energy use. Heating and cooling systems are zoned so only the inhabited areas are fully conditioned when in use. Apartment-style washer and dryers are right sized for a couple. Smaller, drawer-style dishwashers are also available. And, perhaps now is the time to discuss repurposing spaces that were previously used as game rooms or homework stations into areas to accommodate hobbies and interests.

Almost all design discussions should at least contemplate the potential for boomerang kids (children coming home after college), in-laws, or elderly family members who might join the home. For those wanting more independence and privacy, in-law suites sometimes include private entrances and even a small kitchenette. Sometimes kids' rooms are moved to the basement to add more privacy.

For all of us as we get older, a house that incorporates the principles of universal design, which allow us to live comfortably and safely in the homes we love, is a critical conversation. Design considerations include creating accessibility-friendly baths, kitchens, entrances and passageways and

perhaps reconfiguring to minimize steps. Often, a strategy that comes up is the consideration of the installation of an elevator to facilitate long-time use.

The design priorities for each remodel are unique to the family, but thinking about all the different phases of family life is critical to long-term success.

Josh Baker is the founder and co-chairman of BOWA, an award-winning design and construction company specializing in luxury renovations, remodels and additions in the greater Washington, D.C. area. BOWA has more than 25 years of experience and has been honored with 170 local and national awards. Visit www.bowa.com or call 703-734-9050.



Renovated home office by BOWA features space for the whole family.



Custom designed cabinetry in this renovated family foyer in Great Falls, VA keeps a busy family organized.