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HomeLifeStyle

Adding Curb Appeal

Paint, new windows and other details can add up to a major facelift.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

When the owner of a Great Falls, Va., home wanted to update the Tudor-style abode's exterior without compromising its architectural integrity, he sought guidance from Michael Winn, principal at WINN Design + Build.

Replacing the existing, drafty wooden windows with energy-efficient Pella Architect Series windows was the first order of business.

"It was important to the owner that the new windows retained the architectural details like proper site-lines and true-divided light grilles," said Winn.

The design team also replaced the home's rotten wood trim and water-damaged stucco with fiber cement siding and PVC trim. A neutral and contemporary coat of paint replaced the brown color that's often seen on Tudor-style homes. They extended the roof to create a soffit, which improved the home's aesthetics and function. "The deeper eaves create a



PHOTO BY GREG HADLEY

WINN Design + Build was able to maintain the architectural integrity of this Great Falls, Virginia, home while adding modern updates like energy-efficient windows and new siding.

shadow line which are both more attractive and extends the drip line, keeping water away from the foundation," said Winn.

Other ways to improve a home's curb appeal, says Winn, are upgrading the roof, adding landscape lighting and updating and freshening the paint. "One of the simplest and most economical things you can make to improve the curb-appeal of your home is to freshen up the paint," he said. "Replacing an outdated color scheme with something a little more lively will make an instant improvement and not break the bank."

Paying attention to small details, investing in a solid, well-made front door and adding low-maintenance finishes like composite siding and trim can boost the aesthetic appeal of a home's exterior. "Composite ... materials look just like their traditional wood counterparts, but without the ... maintenance," Winn explained.

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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.

HomeLifeStyle

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. Many guests seem surprised at the project's top-to-bottom scope.

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,



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

began considering ways to better integrate the home's rear 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."

Not surprisingly, the core problem was the home's original floor plan.

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.

"Something as simple as custom-designed cabinets can inspire a completely new, and much more functional, floor plan," Fleming says.

"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."

A counter surface with a gas-fueled cooktop range between the kitchen and the formal dining area, thus, provides storage for both the best family china (accessed from the dining room) and everyday cooking necessities (retrievable from the kitchen). A reach-in pantry next to the refrigerator offers supplemental storage. Though the eye-level cabinet clutter has been deleted, Fleming says there's actually been a 35 percent increase in storage capacity.

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.

Better yet, with its bianco romano granite surfaces, square flat cabinet facings and bright, reflective wall coloring, the new space has acquired a design elegance that was never previously in evidence.

"An open plan that segues to a free-flowing indoor/outdoor component is the very essence of a transitional-style interior design solution," says Fleming. "The formal elements provide definition and balance, yet the clean lines allow a lively visual continuum."



Sun Design's Jeremy Fleming extended the shed roof to cover sun-exposed decking. Two overhead rotating fans make the new outdoor space comfortable even on the hottest day. The couple have meals on the deck throughout summer.



The original kitchen relied on rows of builder-grade cabinets for storage. Eliminating walls initially seemed impossible to Laurie, but custom cabinets by Sun Design's Jeremy Fleming created the opportunity for a wholly different floorplan.



To create the shady spot appropriate for dining, Jeremy Fleming extended the shed roof which is now covered with an architecturally-appropriate seamless metal.

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.



The home's unfinished lower-level was converted into a spacious family room and fitness center complete with a billiards table and media viewing area.

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Maximizing Space

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Tonia and Brad Powell felt that some of the spaces in their Vienna home were cramped and over utilized while other areas of their home were barely used at all. They wanted make maximum use of every inch to accommodate their family of five, including children ages 9, 7 and 4.

"[We're] preparing for the coming teenager invasion," said Brad. "In the not too

distant future, [our kids] will be 17, 15, 12. We want our home to accommodate our family well."

Additionally, the Powells felt their 33-year-old home looked dated and they wanted to modernize, particularly in the kitchen and bathrooms.

"We wanted the aesthetics of a newly finished home," said Brad. "The look we were going for was nice, but not elaborate or pretentious."

The couple hired Michael Winn, of WINN Design and Build to give their home an overhaul. "One challenge was [the Powells'] desire to have the project completed before their annual holiday party," said Winn. "This was an aggressive goal. ... Besides, our team was invited to the event so the spotlight would be on us."

The design team, which included an architect, a kitchen and bath designer and an interior designer, worked together to reconcile the project's budget and scope with the Powells' expectations. The renovation plan included gutting the home's exterior and creating an open floor plan.

Contractors removed existing walls to create a chef's kitchen and open up that kitchen to the dining room. The kitchen is painted with Benjamin Moore's Manchester Tan. The white perimeter cabinetry is maple and the countertops are granite. The kitchen also features an island with Wellborn Premier cabinets in cherry-sienna charcoal by Henlow Square.

Walls came down in the family room to create a larger space and new built-in bookcases increased storage. The master and hall bathrooms were renovated as well. The home's exterior space also received

A new addition and some smart storage choices mean this Vienna home can keep up with a busy family of five.



PHOTOS BY GREG HADLEY

The kitchen in Brad and Tonia Powell's Vienna home is painted with Benjamin Moore's Manchester Tan. White perimeter cabinetry is maple and the counter tops are granite.

a makeover, with new flagstones and two new decks.

"Our main special request was that we wanted a mudroom in our home," said Brad. "We went through many different designs trying to solve this problem." Ultimately, a small addition created space for a new powder room, mudroom, laundry room and pantry.

Maximizing the home's space has "allowed us to live more comfortably and do the things we want to do in the house without falling all over each other," said Brad. "The mudroom ... has had an incredible positive impact on our state of mind. All of the stuff – books, backpacks, sports equipment and cleats – that comes in our

"We wanted the aesthetics of a newly finished home. The look we were going for was nice, but not elaborate or pretentious."

— Brad Powell

house now has a place without constantly being in sight all of the time. It's kind of funny to consider that we did a huge remodel for a mudroom, but that's exactly what we did."



WINN Design + Build built a small addition onto Brad and Tonia Powell's Vienna home to allow for a mudroom to store the family's belongings.

Elegant Organization

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Design elements can make maintaining organization throughout the school year elegant and stylish as the activities start to aggregate, notices pile up and calendars start to fill.

"Designate a location for baskets for each family member, such as the entryway or mudroom, and use them daily to keep mail [and] school notices ... organized and in one place," said Marika Meyer of Marika Meyer Interiors. Meyer used this technique in a Potomac, Maryland home recently.

"Consider a couple baskets for each person, one for notices and one for objects such as toys that can be taken to

designated spaces throughout the day."

It makes life easier on everyone, even the smallest family members. "I also like to keep my kids' different items for activities in tote bags or bins in our mudroom area," said Jody Al-Saigh of Picture Perfect Organizing in Arlington. "They can quickly grab what they need for soccer or Girl Scouts on their way out the door, rather than searching all over the house for stray items.

"We make it a rule that those items always live in the designated bag or bin," said Al-Saigh. "If uniforms are washed or water bottles cleaned, for example, they are returned to that area when they are clean."

A home's entryway often becomes a depository for shoes, hats, gloves and other items that are removed when busy families come home after a long day. Simple shelv-

Experts offer tips to keep you organized all school year long.

ing can offer a solution with aesthetic appeal, especially with mounds of clutter.

"If there's space within an entry closet, install shelving along the top for hats, gloves and miscellaneous seasonal items so they can be reached easily and not fall out each time you open the door," said Elle Hunter, director of project development, Case Design/Remodeling. "If there is currently a single shelf but room for another, consider hiring a handyman to add that extra storage. It will go a long way."

For larger or double entry closets, consider installing storage bins or shelves for shoes and boots. "There are shoe trays that can work in a pinch, but also consider building in shelving for bonus organization," said Hunter. "In one instance, we installed closets around a bench in a home for ... ulti-

mate ... entryway organization."

If you don't have a closet in the entryway, invest in a hall tree with hooks or a bench with storage, advises Hunter. "These can often be built into an underused space or under the staircase," she said.

The kitchen is often a hub of a busy family's activities. Afternoon snacks are simplified with latest in kitchen and appliance design including beverage drawers or centers. "They make it easy for young ones to grab a juice box or healthy drink by themselves," said Brian Knipp, remodeling consultant with Fred, a division of Case Remodeling. "Consider installing these if you're planning a kitchen remodel any time soon."

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Diversification Could Help Real Estate Market

Home sales have increased, particularly in Fairfax County, which saw a 22 percent uptick.

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

Vienna-based realtor Craig Lilly with Long and Foster agreed with how Ken Harney, the moderator for the 2015 Northern Virginia Association of Realtors (NVAR) Economic Summit, described the current year's market trends at the gathering earlier this month at the Fairview Park Marriott.

"His assessment of 2015 is on target with what I am experiencing," said Lilly. "So far, so good."

Harney, a nationally-syndicated columnist, categorized 2013 as the "rebound year" when sales and house prices seemed to be back on a roll after years of post-recession doldrums. Then 2014 started out impressively strong as well, but mid-year the market became more "restrained."

"Last Spring things were rocking," said Lilly. "I think that caused some sellers to price too aggressively too quickly in a market that was changing. That certainly had an effect on the slowdown we saw for the rest of the year."

The data for 2015 is on Harney's side. Home sales have increased, particularly in Fairfax County, which saw a 22 percent uptick in sales. Figures just released by Real Estate Business Intelligence report the second-highest level of August sales since 2006, with inventories remaining fairly healthy and time-on-the-market about equal with the same period last year. The August report also showed the average sales price of single-family homes down slightly (.02 percent), while the average price of attached homes and condominiums rose slightly.

But even those positive numbers didn't keep the summit's panellists from making presentations that leaned decidedly towards the cautionary, for both short-term real estate transactions, and the future economic health of the region.

LOOMING ON THE HORIZON is the spectre of another potential government shutdown if Congress fails to pass even a temporary budget by the end of the month. Describing the region as a "company town," and as such, somewhat "vulnerable" to Congressional activity, panellist Dr. Terry Clower, director of George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis, said he wouldn't discount the possibility of a shutdown, despite the insistence of others that neither political party would tolerate that turn of events. Additional sequestration during a Presidential election year is also possible, he said. With a laughing



From left — Jonathan Aberman of TandemNSI, Jill Landsman, NVAR VP of Communications, and summit moderator Ken Harney at the 19th Northern Virginia Association of Realtors Economic Summit.

PHOTOS BY ANDREA WORKER/THE CONNECTION



Dr. Terry Clower, director of George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis, provided detailed data on area employment figures, income, job sector changes and more during the Economic Summit. There was considerable note taking during his presentation.

acknowledgement of his "slight accent – I am from Texas," Clower reminded the audience that for a "good lump of the rest of the country, a government shutdown is not seen as a such a bad thing."

But for a region where almost 40 percent of the economy is directly related to federal wages and salaries, procurement and other federal activity, Clower's analogy of the "company town's" vulnerability seems right on target.

The seemingly endless "Federal Reserve Watch" for interest rate hikes was also discussed by Clower, and by Dr. Lawrence Yun, chief economist with the National Association of Realtors.

"A rate increase is coming, probably sooner rather than later, before the end of the year," predicted Yun, but he also believes that any increase will not have an immediate impact on mortgage rates.

That's an opinion that Weichert Realtors Fair Oaks managing director Lorraine Arora

for awhile," said Arora.

Lilly was more struck by Yun's powerpoints showing homeownership at a 50-year low combined with rental vacancies at a 30-year low and rents at a seven-year high. "There's some things to be thinking about as a Realtor, and really as anyone living and working in this area," he added.

In Yun's research, millennials - who currently represent a large portion of the renters - are actually the most confident about the housing situation, and despite the many obstacles to their entering the market, the majority want to eventually become homeowners. Their achievement of that goal is crucial, according to Yun, who noted that the net worth of homeowners tends to exceed that of renters.

One positive note on real estate trends by Yun that the Realtor attendees appreciated was his belief that the "trade-up" market would probably see an improvement, with potential buyers having more cash-in-hand from their current homes' sales with which to make the move. The figures show that many homes that had fallen below their original purchase price have at the least returned to parity, and in many cases even seen a modest increase in value.

Back on the subject of the "company town" dependency, Clower and Yun both argued that diversification of job sectors is critical to the region's future economic success, requiring greater regional cooperation.

SPEAKING OF ROBOTS, drones, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and the "We Work" models of sharing work, living spaces and resources, Jonathan Aberman, chairman of TandemNSI, focused on technological trends and how they would affect our daily lives. Aberman said that any region that doesn't prepare for these changes with an emphasis on affordably "educating people on how to think, rather than just how to do" will be quickly left behind.

Aberman said that more effort is needed to keep the federal dollars spent on technology and related research here at home. "We need to be encouraging our next generation of 'gazelles,' what we call our fast-growth companies and entrepreneurs. And we need to consider that these people will be more interested in data-ways than high-ways when considering their work options."

To Aberman, that includes rethinking the number of "trophy offices" under construction and in the pipeline. He worries about over-building in commercial properties that sit empty for so long that they cease to be Class A buildings. Before they can be occupied, many are already not up to par for the next wave of change, either technologically, or culturally speaking, he said.

Lorraine Arora tends to agree with Aberman's concerns. "Look at the commercial vacancy rates in Arlington, as just one example," she said. She was also fascinated by Aberman's predictions on technology's influence on society in the very near future.

"It's a little concerning," she said. Technology is good, but I hope we don't get to the point where people just don't leave their homes."



Rob Whitfield, a member of several regional transportation citizens' groups including the Dulles Corridor Users Group, asks a question of the panellists.

shares. "People will still be buying and selling. I think the current situation continues to make people a bit cautious, as Yun suggests, but I agree that we probably won't see much impact on mortgage rates, at least