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After the owners of this Northwest DC Colonial became empty-nesters, they hired the Levine Group to convert their attic kids' room into a master bedroom suite. A stylish vanity and clawfoot tub complete the transformation from rubber-duddy casual.



before



By adding a dormer, the Levine Group flattened out the old sloped ceiling on one side to create more space. Custom built-ins—which more homeowners are choosing over armoires and freestanding shelves—hold books, photos, and a flat-screen TV. The flooring is made of environmentally friendly bamboo.

computer wires and run them through the house. The advantage? Flexibility for future use: Even if you don't want cable television in an upstairs bedroom now, you can add it a few years later without having to go back into the walls.

Suite Dreams

The desire for open, airy spaces isn't limited to the first floor. Master bedrooms now integrate the bedroom, bathroom, and closet into one open suite with his-and-her baths and dressing rooms.

Countering Granite

Remodelers are seeing a movement away from glossy granite countertops.

"Although the majority of people still go with granite, there's also a growing desire to do something different," says Tom Gilday of Gilday Renovations.

More homeowners are choosing honed surfaces with a subdued or matte finish; popular choices are soapstone, limestone, and slate. Although those surfaces can be harder to clean and maintain than granite, their nonreflective veneer has a softer look.

What's Old Is New Again

Recessed lighting, which involves mounting fixtures so they are flush with the ceiling,

is beginning to cool off.

Tom Glass of Glass Construction says clients are moving away from the "Swiss-cheese ceiling" in favor of a central lighting fixture complemented by floor and table lamps.

Greater Outdoors

More homeowners are adding decks, patios, and "outdoor rooms" with chairs, sofas, and tables made to withstand the elements. Old-fashioned charcoal barbecues no longer are enough; outdoor kitchens feature running water, refrigerators, and high-end stainless-steel grills.

What Else Is Hot

- Wine cellars with tasting areas and temperature controls.
- Laundry rooms on the second or third floor instead of in the basement.
- Slate roofs, which last at least 50 years, instead of less-expensive shingles, which often need replacing after 20 years.
- Open showers with lots of light.
- Safe rooms where families can go in an emergency.
- Built-in cabinets instead of freestanding armoires, dressers, and bookcases.
- Single-floor house plans with wider hallways and fewer steps.

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Top Remodelers

Here are local architects and builders who get good recommendations

[*By* MARY CLARE FLEURY]



For this breakfast nook in the turret of a Dupont Circle townhouse, Glass Construction and architects Whuk Spurlock tore out the flat ceiling to expose the original vaulted dome, put in French-limestone floors, and added trim and uplighting.



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The owners of this Bethesda Colonial hired Case Design to turn a 1960s-era solarium into a family room and patio. Case knocked down the back wall and installed French doors leading to a new brick-and-flagstone terrace.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CASE DESIGN REMODELING

tion to detail, this contractor is a good choice for large residential projects.

Gibson Builders, Northwest DC; 202-364-1555; gibsonbuilders.com. Primarily a custom-home builder, Jim Gibson's firm also does large renovations. A top vote-getter, Gibson comes highly recommended by architects, builders, and clients.

Gilday Renovations, Silver Spring; 301-565-4600; gilday.com. Kevin Gilday's ten-person team includes architects, interior designers, and builders who work in both contemporary and traditional styles.

Glass Construction, Northwest DC; 202-362-6012; gcide.com. Tom Glass works mostly in Georgetown and Cleveland Park and specializes in historic renovations.

Hopkins & Porter Construction, Potomac; 301-840-9121; hopkinsandporter.com. Guy Hopkins Semmes and Michael Porter Denker founded Hopkins & Porter almost 30 years ago. The design/build firm has two architects on staff and offers handyman services for smaller jobs.

Horizon Builders, Crofton; 800-726-4876; horizonbuildersinc.net. Among our

top vote-getters, this design/build firm gets praise for being detail-oriented and finishing projects on time.

Landis Construction Corporation, Northwest DC; 202-726-3777; landisconstruction.com. The Landis brothers—Ethan, an MBA, and Chris, an architect and president of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry's Washington chapter—design and do high-end additions and facelifts.

Levine Group, Silver Spring; 301-585-4848; thelevinegroup.com. Jerry Levine has more than 30 years of experience as a builder and remodeler. His design/build firm specializes in midsize to large projects and provides architectural, construction, and interior-design services.

LifeCraft, Northwest DC; 202-362-3830; lifecraftinc.com. This contractor, a top vote-getter, specializes in large renovations and new homes.

Mark IV Builders, Bethesda; 240-395-0400; markivbuilders.com. Mark Scott's design/build firm does lots of "contemporary-polonial," or Colonial exteriors paired

after



Architecture: Studio27 Architecture and Glass Construction
 Photograph: courtesy of Glass Construction

This 1950s Chevy Chase home had a kitchen that the owners decided was too dark and cramped. Studio27 Architecture and Glass Construction transformed it into a light-filled, contemporary space. Without wall cabinets, the kitchen feels open—a pantry on one end of the island provides storage. A wall of steel-framed windows allows in light, and concrete countertops give a softer look than granite.

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What's in Style

Kitchens without walls, outdoor rooms, energy-efficient additions, and other trends in remodeling

[By MARY CLARE FLEURY]

HOMES in Washington were once built with separate living and dining rooms where families entertained on special occasions and showcased their nicest furniture.

Today's homeowners are saying: "Tear down those walls."

Homeowners are more interested in comfort and function than formality—they want bigger, open layouts. Many remodeling projects take down walls and transform several small rooms into one larger one.

Flowing spaces that combine kitchen, great room, and dining room have become the heart of the home. The kitchen has become the center of activity. It's where families cook and eat, entertain, watch TV, use the computer, and do homework. As

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the kitchen's role in family life has grown, so has its size.

Formal living rooms are often the largest and least-used room in older houses. Many homeowners are remodeling and using the whole space for a kitchen/great room, while others shrink the formal living room and transform it into a den.

We asked local architects and remodelers what other trends they are seeing.

Kitchens Without Walls

Even though kitchen size continues to grow, homeowners are also looking for ways to make it feel more open.

One trend is to put appliances like compact refrigerators beneath countertops. Another fad is to get rid of wall cabinets, which take lots of space and can make a kitchen feel confined. Instead, homeowners are adding more pantries.

Green Houses

The hottest trend in remodeling is environmentally conscious or "green" design and materials. From tankless water heaters to bamboo floors, Washingtonians are looking for ways to save energy, natural resources, and money.

For more information on how to go green, see page 170.

High-Tech Living

With their flat-screen TVs, wireless Internet, and remote lighting and thermostat controls, homeowners are getting more sophisticated about wiring. According to Douglas Rixey of Rixey-Rixey Architects, "remodeling is the perfect time to add complicated wiring to your home."

Rixey says it's not uncommon to bundle telephone, fiber optics, television, and