

From man caves to mudrooms: Making every square foot count

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Upsizing to a bigger home might be out of reach for a majority of homeowners in this depressed housing market, so many are opting to stay put and maximize their existing spaces through remodels, according to the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI).

A recent American Institute of Architects Home Design Trends Survey showed that homeowners are rethinking how they use the square footage they have. They are converting previously unused areas, such as basements and attics, and incorporating outdoor areas into their design plans in an effort to boost their home's livability and value. Some are also using additions to create better flow between existing rooms and make living areas more practical.

"It's all about maximizing space and making a home feel larger," said Sonny Nazemian, president and CEO of Michael Nash Custom Kitchens & Homes, Inc. in Fairfax, Va. He and his design team recently won a 2009 CotY Award for a two-story, 1,250-square-foot addition they built on a 2,300-square foot house. The remodeler helped the homeowners reconfigure their existing spaces to optimize traffic flow, create new living areas and improve storage.

"Before the project, the house felt extremely small," Nazemian said. "The first floor was cramped and they had a small dining room and narrow family room. By adding 12 feet on the back of the house, the living spaces became much larger."

The remodeled home now boasts a gourmet kitchen with a bigger and brighter breakfast area. The small dining room became a laundry room, and Nazemian made space for a new dining room. Upstairs, hallways and a bedroom were expanded, and a bathroom was added.

Reworking the home's footprint also created a spot for a "man cave," or lounging area for the husband. Outfitted with a couple of lounge chairs, a television, custom shelving and sound system, the man of the house now uses the 10 x 20-foot bonus room to watch games with family and friends.

"When you add 10 or 12 feet to a home, it can change the entire configuration," Nazemian said. "In just three to four months, we really transformed and opened up this space."

About NARI: The National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) is the only trade association dedicated solely to the remodeling industry. With more than 7,700 member companies nationwide, the Association -- based in Des Plaines, Illinois — is "The Voice of the Remodeling Industry. For tips on remodeling using green techniques and materials, visit NARI's green Web site, www.greenremodeling.org .