

# At Home

## Start renovating for the future today

**RUSS GLICKMAN**

It is common today to see seniors taking an incremental approach to long-term housing decisions, an appropriate response given the many unknowns.

We are in an era in which tailored, transitional solutions often present the best option for satisfying complex requirements that include mobility needs, personal security and even home resale value.

Take, for example, the case of George and Achya Saad, two local seniors who began investigating plans for retrofit-

ting their three-level home as Achya Saad transitioned from a walker to a wheelchair. The idea was to improve Achya Saad's everyday mobility and even incorporate equipment needed for physical therapy while appreciably preserving the home's mainstream appeal should they later decide to sell and move to a retirement facility.

After weighing several scenarios, the couple called me in to make recommendations. I began by looking into adding an elevator, but soon realized this would disrupt the existing second floor without really ac-

commodating critical personal needs.

The home's mostly unfinished 2,000-square-foot lower level, however, presented an opportunity. I soon saw the potential for a largely self-sufficient, one-level suite complete with accessible bath, kitchenette and other amenities.

### THE PLAN

Configured as an open floor plan that incorporates a sizable master suite, the new layout is broken up into zones that emphasize privacy within a pleasing visual continuum. The key

components include:

- An 11-by-13-foot kitchenette and dining zone finished with cherry, Shaker-style cabinet facings, granite counter surfaces and ceramic tile flooring. As per local code requirements, the kitchen is equipped with a microwave rather than a full stove.
- A combination den and family room contiguous to the dining area offers direct access to the rear yard. The space has been fitted with a large-scale plasma TV and a Sensurround sound system. This is the family's primary entertainment zone.

- A private master suite with a spacious bedroom conjoined to a luxury bath that includes a 5-by-8-foot curbless roll-in shower with a pull-down seat. The bathroom connects to a fully equipped laundry room. There also is a large walk-in closet.

To increase natural light availability, I added a pair of windows to the master bedroom. The room also accommodates an easy-to-access hospital bed.

Beyond the floor plan, our goal was to make the new

## REDESIGN

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suite aesthetically cohesive and directly responsive to the couple's needs. To assure a suitable area for physical therapy treatments, we custom-designed a wall cabinet in the dining area that contains a pull-down table. The casing has been reinforced with a steel frame that keeps the table firmly in place once it is in the upright position.

To accommodate a necessary incline wheelchair platform lift, the steps leading to the suite from the first floor were widened from 30 to 46 feet. We also enlarged the stairwell and rebuilt the staircase from scratch.

In the master bath, plans called for a curbless, roll-in shower with a pull-down shower seat and grab bars. There also are a pair of vanity sinks — one 30 inches from the ground for wheelchair access.

To make it easier for the Saads to identify visitors, the home's front door was equipped with a security camera linked to a laptop. We also introduced devices that allow the couple to lock and unlock the front door from the lower level suite.

Aesthetically, the suite's

interior design details convey warmth and spatial cohesion in all directions.

Mosaic tile flooring differentiates the kitchen and dining zone from the adjacent den and entertainment area. Typhoon green granite surfaces and lightly stained cabinet facings lend colors and textures to the kitchen area that easily integrate into a great room dominated by a large-double slider. The master bathroom features porcelain flooring and walls accented with decorative, multi-colored mosaic tiles.

In short, it's a pretty, comfortable home that's also healing and supportive.

Our goal was to satisfy immediate needs while implementing a makeover that will add resale value. In this sense, the house has simply been redefined as a traditional single family home that includes an in-law suite. It's a very marketable improvement, yet meets all the present requirements.

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