

NEWTON

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**MIDDLE EAST
DEBATE COMES
TO NEWTON**

**MT. EVEREST
CLIMBER
RECOUNTS
ADVENTURE**

**NEWTON
MAGAZINE'S
SPRING/
SUMMER
FASHION
SHOOT**

**NEW SPAM
SOFTWARE
PASSES
INITIAL
TESTING**

**TRIBUTE TO
PASSING
OF NONANTUM
'BEDROCK'**

**HOME
AN ORIENTAL
CARPET RIDE**

**DECONSTRUCTING
DESIGN**

**PROTECTION
AGAINST
CONTRACTORS**

**NEW
FANGLED
SCREENS**



AFTER



REMODELED STAIRWAY PLATFORM AND NEW WALL OPENED UP LIVING ROOM SPACE AND FOYER.

BEFORE



NEWTON
RENOVATION
**Decon-
structured**

Few 'hands off' clients

Newton Magazine, Volume 3, Number 3, 2004

AFTER

NEW BOXED-IN FIREPLACE TREATMENT OFFERED A TOOL NICHE AND TV CABINET WHICH IS VISIBLE THROUGH THE DINING ROOM THAT FEATURES NEW LIGHTING.



BEFORE



A HOME RENOVATION PROJECT in Newton typically involves close consultation with clients who have strong views and who themselves often become immersed in the details.

That, at least, is the experience of *Feinmann Remodeling Inc.* whose chief architect Barry Maier, shared with *Newton Magazine* the details of one of its projects on behalf of a Newton home. In the end, the project turned out to be a “resounding success.”

“There are very few hands-off clients,” Maier said. As the project progressed, decisions have to be made which required a night’s sleep before choosing. At some points, even the carpenter was worried about the outcome,” he said.

Decisions in this case had to be made because of dilemmas that were caused by the small size of the house involved, according to the architect. “It was a very challenging project,” he said. “Decisions often were over a matter of inches. For example, we fought epic battles over the height of a wall between the living and dining rooms, negotiating where the line would hit a head. It was an interesting battle to see what should be the criteria of how it would work during entertaining.”

The project initially was to renovate the family’s bathroom. In the end, it evolved into adding fresh sunlight into an underused living room which itself was renovated into a more appealing, usable space.

The owner of this home was a couple in their forties with a 13-year old daughter. They began by asking for the second floor

bathroom to be remodelled but at the same time were bothered by the stairway to the second floor. They inquired whether it could be moved. “We told them it would be very expensive to move it and would require taking space from an existing bedroom,” Maier said. A discussion then ensued about the problems of a living room with an odd layout. One suggestion was to expand the rear of the house to expand the bathroom and make the living room more functional, he said. “In the end, the only real addition was the sunroom area.”

He continued, “There was a small table next to the kitchen where the family spent much of their time. There also was a long, narrow sunroom. Also, the foyer was small and cramped. Finally, there was lots of dead space in the living room.” In the end, he said,

these problems were addressed with "subtle transitional spaces."

The full project from initial consultation to completion took about four months. The client was involved in the design and "very happy with it," the architect said. "We opened the house from the living room to the sunroom. The bathroom was not done. Here is the architect's statement about the project:

THE CHALLENGE:

The owners of this home wanted to make better use of their narrow dining room, living room, and sunroom while keeping each one distinct. Also, they wanted to improve the lighting throughout. Essentially we wanted to address four main weaknesses of the living space:

- 1) Narrow and poorly proportioned living room
- 2) Poor lighting
- 3) Awkward circulation to the stairway
- 4) Tight entry foyer

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AFTER



NEW SUNROOM AREA OFFERED FRESH SIGHT LINES, SPACE AND LIGHT.

BEFORE



THE STRATEGY:

The architect said: "The wall separating the living and dining rooms had an odd jog in it, so the first thing we wanted to do was straighten it by pushing back from the fireplace, which would add more space to the living room improving its proportions without compromising the dining room. We also opened up the fireplace wall on both ends to allow a continuous line of sight from the sunroom through the living room and into the dining room, allowing natural lighting to flood through the whole space.

"The entry points of the main foyer and the stairway were awkwardly placed as well. We expanded the foyer by incorporating some marginal living room space and by relocating the entry closet. We could not relocate the stairway without major expense and re-working of the upstairs plan, so we solved the problem of circulation by extending the bottom stair to create a platform. Not only did this platform help to balance the

entrance way, the long line of the landing running at a tangent to the living room enhanced the sense of width, added a natural edge for an "L-shaped" furnishing design. The finishing touch was the bay window complete with window seats we installed over this landing to help increase lighting and space.

ADDITIONAL DESIGN TOUCHES:


"Another distracting feature of the living room was the fireplace, which was off-center from the masonry chimney. We created our own symmetry by adding a tool niche, allowing us to center the mantelpiece along the wall. We were also able to hide the large TV by creating a pocket cabinet with recessed doors, allowing the owners to entertain in a parlour-like setting rather than a "family TV room" atmosphere.

THE RESULT:

"The renovation was a complete success, both in terms of design and client satisfaction. We have added symmetry and natural pathways for traffic. Lighting is vastly improved, and has an interesting side effect in the evening: as the light dims, the impending darkness creates a quiet intimacy in each room, making the spaces cozy but not claustrophobic. Most importantly, we have increased the size of the living room, allowing for more furnishing options in a wider living space. The sense of openness from room to room created with this renovation is exactly what our client desired."

A typical Feinmann remodelling project ranges from \$200,000 to \$350,000. The firm specializes in the design and construction of high quality projects including residential kitchens, baths, custom additions, and whole house and historic renovations. It offers an expanding design department, which permits them to do larger projects. "We are working on a \$975,000 home in Lexington and more and more are working with discerning, high end clients," Maier said. Feinmann employs its own staff carpenters. Specialties such as plumbing and electrical work are done by outside contractors.

"What's important," states Peter Feinmann, President of the company, "is the satisfied client. Our number one objective is to make sure our clients match well with our company and services. We listen to what's important to them and how they function within their household. It is then our job to be creative with the solutions. Our clients hire us for the comfort and security we provide by offering architectural and build teams within the same company."

Another goal of the Feinmann "team" is to minimize frustrations often associated with home renovations by meeting schedules, being realistic about construction costs and having an intelligent, caring and supportive professional staff. In addition, the Feinmann warranty program is a benefit clients truly appreciate. "A year after the project is completed," Feinmann states, "we visit the client and inspect our work to see what, if anything, needs to be touched up. We expect our clients to be clients for life. We don't forget about them when we walk out the door." 
Feinmann Remodeling Inc. 781-643-6269, email at Info@feinmann.com or visit the website at www.feinmann.com

AFTER

INVITING TREATMENT OF PASSAGEWAY TOGETHER WITH NEW LIVING ROOM LIGHTING, BRIGHTENED A FORMERLY DEAD SPACE.

