

design gallery



Living it up on the lower level

Compared to putting an addition on your current home or moving to a new one, finishing your basement can be an economical way to add a home office, a media room, an in-law suite, or a recreation room. The lower-level transformation shown on these two pages, which added 550 sq. ft. of living space, was designed and constructed by homeowner/architect John T. Conroy. Using a contemporary design and clean lines, Conroy successfully elevated his basement from dingy dungeon to stylish great room.

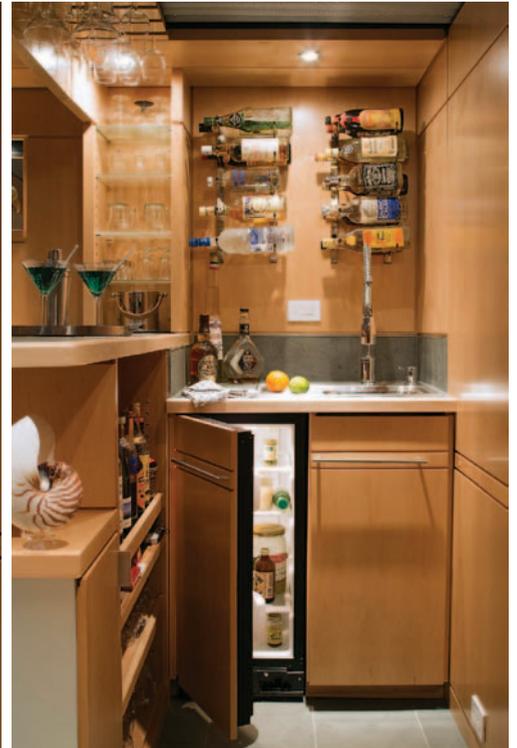
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ROOM TO UNWIND

To transition from the upper level to the lower level, stair treads (photo right) use the same flooring from the first floor, and risers echo the slate used on the lower level. Maple-veneer panels are secured to the walls, and perforated corrugated metal sheets are installed on the ceiling. Bands of maple on the ceiling add interest and divide the space visually. Horizontal bands of maple heighten the perception of length to the wall panels. Slate flooring installed over a heat mat complements the maple and metal.

Design, millwork, and construction: John T. Conroy, Princeton Design Collaborative, Princeton, N.J.

Photographs: Jeffrey Tryon, courtesy of Princeton Design Collaborative



Home-time happy hour. Tucked into a corner, this wet bar has plenty of storage for glasses and bottles within easy reach of the bartender. The undersink cabinet and refrigerator doors are faced with maple-veneer panels to continue the sleek, clean look of the space. The bar top is angled to guide the eye out of the corner and toward the main sitting area. Set into the wall opposite the stairway, a display niche is another design trick used to draw the eye into the room. With its mirrored back, the niche gives the illusion of being another window, helping to lessen the feeling of being below ground level.



Sit for a spell. Installed above the entertainment wall, stained-glass windows by Andersen bring daylight into the space while screening the at-grade outdoor view. This lessens the impression of being in a below-grade room. The entertainment zone houses a 60-in. flat-screen television in its own niche, audiovisual components located behind a Plexiglas door, and storage for DVDs and CDs. The home's computer server and additional storage are located behind a large L-shaped door. Conroy's custom coffee table and built-in bench enhance the modern but cozy feel of this portion of the room.





YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD BASEMENT NEW TRICKS

This lower-level space was a real dog—kennel, that is—until new homeowners enlisted the design/build firm 131shapes to transform it.

The media room that now occupies the space features a direct-vent gas fireplace with a contemporary-style copper and concrete surround and mantel. The bar area is outfitted with custom cabinetry and a concrete bar top. A wine-storage and hobby room, laundry room, and full bath complete the renovation and provide plenty of space to showcase the owners' eclectic art collection. Family members and guests agree that there's nothing wrong with being in the doghouse when it's as comfortable and welcoming as this basement is now.

Design, construction, and photographs:
Chad Carter and Matt Roule, 131shapes, Pittsburgh





COLD CONCRETE MELTS INTO SPA BATH

Mapping the floor plan of this 140-sq.-ft. basement spa bath with blue tape was a clever move by its builder, Paul Johnson. It not only helped his clients to visualize the final footprint, but it also helped him to troubleshoot the layout of a basement project that included four separate areas: sauna, steam shower, bathroom, and foyer/changing room. Removable floor panels in the cedar sauna make cleaning the travertine tile easy. A frameless glass shower door, well-placed lighting, a dual-flush wall-hung toilet, and a pocket door maximize utility in this small space.



Design and construction: Paul Johnson, Paul Johnson Carpentry and Remodeling, Portland, Ore.

Process photograph: Paul Johnson
"After" photographs: Nina Johnson



KNOTTY PINE ... NOT!



This 1960s lower-level den was overwhelmed by pine paneling; a low, cracked, textured ceiling; poor lighting; and a drab, brick-faced fireplace. To update the room, inexpensive MDF was split into block-size pieces and painted to mimic slate wainscot. To minimize the 30-ft.-long wall, the drywall was panelized with reveals and finished with burnished Venetian plaster. Smoked-glass tiles transform the fireplace into a focal point. A thin layer of drywall covers the ceiling, and new lighting illuminates the perimeter.

Design, construction, and "before" photograph: Mason Hearn, HomeMasons Inc., Manakin-Sabot, Va.

"After" photograph: Fotografikos Imagery