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Collaboration key to success in updating Shadyside home



Ben Maguire

The original condo had an interior courtyard that architect Ben Maguire kept and updated.



By **Bob Karlovits**

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Architect Ben Maguire says he blended modern design elements with a feature that dates back millennia in redoing a home in Shadyside.

But he and one of the owners think the real key to success came from planners working together.

“It was a real organic process,” says Sarah Drawbaugh, who owns the three-bedroom condo with her husband, Dan.

The effort began with a home of a design that was popular in the '40s and '50s. It became a residence that took its oldest style feature — an interior courtyard — and added to it top-end modern appliances and a high-tech electronic system.

“The best thing is that we were able to share ideas,” says Maguire from Swissvale.

He says courtyards were popular in ancient Europe and Rome because they provided security and privacy. This courtyard does the same thing, but it has been modernized with a design that helps share the light from the open space.

It has been brought into the 21st century with its mild color, woodwork that matches the style elsewhere

and speakers from a whole-house sound system.

“We knew we wanted something else,” Sarah Drawbaugh says. “We knew we wanted to open it up, but we didn’t know how specifically. That was all Ben. He was a real visionary.”

Maguire says that word is too strong for what he did and insists the secret was the Drawbaughs being able to work with ideas; to accept some and to change others

He also says work by cabinet/woodwork designer John Nagg from Acclaimed Kitchens in Cranberry was important because the condo is so full of woodwork — from cabinet to closets to doors and trim.

Nagg says when Maguire designed the look of the kitchen, he was able to craft woodwork that would fit it and the rest of the condo.

He calls it a “transitional” style that leans to the modern but yet has a hint of traditional design.

Nagg says Dan Drawbaugh made contact with him after he saw some of Nagg's work at his Cranberry showroom.

The condo has been redesigned from a traditional look in which the kitchen was at the far side of the rooms that surround the courtyard. It was separated from the dining room by a wall with “a tiny door,” Sarah says.

A similar wall and door was between the dining room and living room. Both walls are gone now.

The result is a family room behind the entrance foyer and a large kitchen connected to it at a 90-degree angle.

Both rooms have exterior walls facing the courtyard and skylights in the kitchen bring in more light.

Sarah says she appreciates how Maguire opened the room that became the kitchen. He and the owners found an angled space between the ceiling and the roof that was not being used. By angling the ceiling up to the roof-line, Maguire was able to open the room, which was brightened by the skylights.

The counter in the kitchen is topped by kamikagama granite, which sets a “very naturalistic look in its colors,” says Carmine Trenga from Premier Granite & Stone from Carnegie.

He used another form of Brazilian granite in the master bath, which features blue Bahia, a stone that he says makes an “aquatic look perfect for a bathroom.”

He says he and his business partner Mike Piskurich use those Brazilian stones “in maybe two houses a year, maybe one.”

The master bath has other striking features, Sarah says.

It is between the master bedroom and a dressing/closet area. The seven-head shower has an entrance on the bedroom side and an exit on the other, allowing one person to get up, shower and get dressed without disturbing the other.

A space with a sink and a non-fog mirror allows for shaving or makeup application before a person leaves the bath area into the dressing room.

Another bedroom and bath round out the first floor. In the basement is another bedroom with its own bath and a small living-room area.

“It is like a guest apartment,” Sarah says.

The house features a high level of electronic features basically designed by her husband, she says. He worked with installers to put in a whole house stereo system that is connected to change the brightness and color of kitchen lights at certain times.

Lights and sound are controllable by a tablet mounted in the dining room wall.

A lock system controlled by an electronic key sent to a smartphone allows the recipient to unlock the door with a tap of a finger.

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