

after



PHOTOGRAPH BY CELIA FOWLER

before



After the owners of this Northwest DC Colonial became empty-nesters, they hired the Levine Group to convert their attic kids' room into a master bedroom suite. A stylish vanity and clawfoot tub complete the transformation from rubber-ducky casual.



before



By adding a dormer, the Levine Group flattened out the old sloped ceiling on one side to create more space. Custom built-ins—which more homeowners are choosing over armoires and freestanding shelves—hold books, photos, and a flat-screen TV. The flooring is made of environmentally friendly bamboo.

computer wires and run them through the house. The advantage? Flexibility for future use: Even if you don't want cable television in an upstairs bedroom now, you can add it a few years later without having to go back into the walls.

Suite Dreams

The desire for open, airy spaces isn't limited to the first floor. Master bedrooms now integrate the bedroom, bathroom, and closet into one open suite with his-and-her baths and dressing rooms.

Countering Granite

Remodelers are seeing a movement away from glossy granite countertops.

"Although the majority of people still go with granite, there's also a growing desire to do something different," says Tom Gilday of Gilday Renovations.

More homeowners are choosing honed surfaces with a subdued or matte finish; popular choices are soapstone, limestone, and slate. Although those surfaces can be harder to clean and maintain than granite, their nonreflective veneer has a softer look.

What's Old Is New Again

Recessed lighting, which involves mounting fixtures so they are flush with the ceiling,

is beginning to cool off.

Tom Glass of Glass Construction says clients are moving away from the "Swiss-cheese ceiling" in favor of a central lighting fixture complemented by floor and table lamps.

Greater Outdoors

More homeowners are adding decks, patios, and "outdoor rooms" with chairs, sofas, and tables made to withstand the elements. Old-fashioned charcoal barbecues no longer are enough; outdoor kitchens feature running water, refrigerators, and high-end stainless-steel grills.

What Else Is Hot

- Wine cellars with tasting areas and temperature controls.

- Laundry rooms on the second or third floor instead of in the basement.

- Slate roofs, which last at least 50 years, instead of less-expensive shingles, which often need replacing after 20 years.

- Open showers with lots of light.

- Safe rooms where families can go in an emergency.

- Built-in cabinets instead of freestanding armoires, dressers, and bookcases.

- Single-floor house plans with wider hallways and fewer steps.