

The Restaurant Issue

MAY/JUNE 2014 \$4.95

Bethesda

#EATNEW

8 trends
that are changing
how we dine out

Plus:

Should the county get
out of **liquor sales**?

Parents who allow
**underage drinking
parties**

POSTNET 9584
USPS PERMIT
NO. 1000
WASHINGTON, DC

SHERRY MOELLER
MOKI MEDIA
12215 WONDER VIEW WAY
NORTH POTOMAC MD 20878-3751

0001 0048 000011 01:010211
CAP-RT SORT-R-025

Chevy Chase / Gaithersburg / Kensington / Potomac / Rockville / Silver Spring / Upper NW DC

Bethesda Magazine HOME

MAY/JUNE 2014



MICHAEL VENTURA

188 House Appropriations

It's East meets West in home design, as Asian influences enter into the mix.

By Carolyn Weber

COVER STORY

190 The Natural Gardener

For Silver Spring's Edamarie Mattei, a landscaping career developed...well, organically.

By Kathleen Wheaton

HOME COVER PHOTO BY ERICK GIBSON

196 Dressed to Sell

Home stagers aren't just helping to sell a house—they're helping buyers imagine a way of life.

By Gabriele McCormick

203 Living Light

Three local couples talk about how they downsized their homes—and discovered the joys of living with less.

By Christine MacDonald and Scott Sowers

212 By the Numbers

A look at the most expensive home sales in the area, as well as home sales by ZIP codes.



Interior
Designers'
Best-Kept
Secret



Metro Region's finest luxury furnishings
showroom and design center – open to the public

SPRING INTO NEST with 40% off
one retail priced piece through June

11416 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, across from
White Flint Mall | 301.231.5600 | www.nest301.com



JANET KINZER AND ALAN ABRAMS



CHRIS AND TRISH ABELL



SUSAN AND KENNY KASNETT

LIVING LIGHT

Three Bethesda area couples enjoy the feeling of freedom that comes with downsizing their homes

By Christine MacDonald and Scott Sowers | Photos by Darren Higgins

AS A NATION, we do most of our moving in our younger years. Twenty-somethings cross the country in pursuit of better jobs. Thirty-somethings move to bigger houses and communities with better schools. By the time most of us hit late middle age, we've accumulated so much stuff along the way that the idea of another move has about as much appeal as a root canal.

Still, 29 percent of Americans between the ages of 50 and 64 were planning to move within the next five years, according to The Conference Board's 2012 Consumer Confidence Survey.

For many, doing so means jettisoning the possessions of a lifetime.

"The keyword is convenience," says real estate agent Zelda Heller, a TTR Sotheby's International Realty agent who has experienced the process firsthand. She and her husband, Izzy, downsized from a house in Bethesda to a condominium in the Parc Somerset complex in Chevy Chase in 2000. To make the move more manageable, she came up with a system of color-coded stickers that she now recommends to all her clients—a blue tag for furniture and other items they want to keep or give away to the chil-

dren; white for donations; red for items to be sold at estate sales; and so forth.

"One collects and collects when you are younger," she says, "and suddenly your possessions are not all that important" compared to the yen for travel and enjoying life unencumbered from the pressures of maintaining a big home and garden.

Carol Walser, a partner at Bethesda Estate Service, says downsizing is definitely gaining popularity. She should know. After divorcing at age 48, she held an estate sale and downsized from a three-bedroom colonial in Bethesda's Wood Acres neighborhood to a town-

house in Carderock.

"Every situation is unique," Walser says. She has seen people who grew up in the Depression struggle to part with their belongings. "The Depression-era folks are more concerned with passing down the family heirlooms," she says. By contrast, "younger people are more comfortable with getting rid of their stuff."

Some of that may have to do with this point in history. "Life is so complicated," one real estate expert notes, "making it simpler is appealing."

Here are three area couples who decided to downsize, and how they did it. >>



THE HOUSE AROUND THE CORNER

CHRIS AND TRISH ABELL, CHEVY CHASE

AT 65, CHRIS ABELL has spent nearly his entire life in Chevy Chase Village. In fact, he has spent most of it within a few hundred yards of his childhood home on Magnolia Parkway.

Abell, formerly the president of Mater Dei School in Bethesda, and his wife, Trish, a retired reading specialist, briefly lived in Bethesda before moving to Chevy Chase in 1979 to raise a family. By 2002, their kids were nearly grown and the Abells were thinking about how they could downsize without leaving the neighborhood. That year, a small house on West Irving Street—right around the corner from their home—went on the market. So the couple bought it, rented it out for four years, and finally, in 2006, embarked on renovations before moving in.

First, though, they had to get rid of the possessions they'd accumulated—and that

alone took more than a year.

They gave much of their furniture to their four kids. But the younger generation, whose tastes run more to Pottery Barn and Crate&Barrel, passed up antiques such as their grandmother's Heron Fine China. That went into an estate sale, along with the gold-rimmed soup tureen Trish's mother had given her. "I never used it; it took me 20 years to realize I could get rid of it," Trish says of the dish.

The Abells also held four or five garage sales, and called Goodwill to cart away the remainder of their belongings.

"You go through a purging stage and it feels kind of good," Trish says. "It was a lot of work. I'm glad we did it when we did, because I'm not sure I'd still have the energy."

Even as they downsized, the Abells were upsizing their new house. Zoning rules required the preservation

of at least 50 percent of the existing structure. So their architect, George Myers of GTM Architects in Bethesda, devised a plan to temporarily brace the walls, lift the house and build a foundation where there was none.

Myers also reversed the direction of the gabled roof to better blend with the neighborhood, and he opened up the interior. He created large wall openings bolstered by casings—but without the partitioning walls—throughout the first floor to maintain the sense of distinct rooms while making the most of the home's original 1,280 square feet of living space on the first and second floors.

After adding a finished basement and an attic suite with a bedroom and full bath, the couple ended up with about 3,400 square feet of living space, considerably less than the 5,500 square feet they left behind. The result is

a traditional-looking home outside with the airiness of a contemporary design inside.

Myers and Bethesda-based interior designer Kelley Proxmire, who was called in to help, refer to it as a "big small house." Taking into account the Abells' desire to entertain, Myers and Proxmire converted the old living room into a more versatile space with a wet bar. The first floor also has a mudroom and den.

Upstairs, there's a master suite and two more bedrooms, and the attic suite provides plenty of room for children and grandchildren when they visit.

There's a media room in the basement, and the couple had an elevator shaft installed in case stairs become a problem as they get older. The Abells moved into the home in 2009.

"It's a little gem," Trish says of her "big small house."

—Christine MacDonald

Kelley Proxmire

