

LIVING WELL IN THE TWIN CITIES

# spaces

›SPECIAL ISSUE‹

## Before & After

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# growing up and down



A St. Paul family looking for more room in their home found it in the attic and the basement.

Almost anyone who has an attic also has dreams of finishing it. \* Mike Leitner and Vanessa Matiski decided to follow up on their attic daydreams as their needs for square footage expanded along with their family. \* “We needed more space, but we loved the neighborhood and didn’t want to move — and yet we also didn’t want to change the lines of the home by putting an addition on it,” Leitner said. \* “Having more closet space, more privacy and a bathroom that was just ours were our goals,” Matiski says. “We also wanted a good play area for the kids.” So, the couple looked up and down to find the space to grow — and they enlisted the help of Sylvestre Construction of Minneapolis to finish both the basement and attic of their 2½-story Tudor in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood of St. Paul. \* “The attic had a wood-paneled office and the

BY MOLLY MILLETT, PHOTOS BY KAREN MELVIN







“The suite includes a niche that’s just the right size for a king-sized bed and two nightstands (the furniture was measured before the remodel started), and, very important, the space includes a master bathroom.”



Before it was a master suite, the family’s partially finished attic included a catch-all office space.

rest was unfinished space we used for storage,” Leitner says.

The couple envisioned transforming the attic into a master suite — but it was not a simple process.

“We lifted the roof above the stairs to get a little more head room, and we created dormers on another side of the house to get more space above the bed,” says John Sylvestre. “The stairs leading up to the attic were also a little too steep, so we replaced those.”

The result is a retreat for this busy working couple with two children, ages 8 and 3.

“I like that it’s remote from the rest of the house — for the privacy it gives us,” Matiski says.

“You come up the steps and it’s this wide open space that’s much bigger than our other bedrooms,” Leitner says.


The suite includes a niche that’s just the right size for a king-sized bed and two nightstands (the furniture was measured before the remodel started), and, very important, the space includes a master bathroom.

“Before, we only had one bathroom in the house, if you don’t count the toilet that was in the basement,” Leitner says.

The suite has a feel of a sitting room,







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**The attic was mostly used for storage before the remodel.**

too, with cozy features like built-in bookcases.

“We’d like to get a chaise lounge in there to sit on,” Leitner says.

The attic also has important new mechanical features, such as central air conditioning, and storage space, including a walk-in closet.

Downstairs, the basement remodel involved some engineering feats.

“They decided they wanted to drop the floor in the basement by several inches to create more ceiling height,” Sylvestre says. “Doing something like that is as challenging as you might think it is.” (It involved removing the basement floor; digging down; pouring a new floor; and, of course, stabilizing the foundation in the process.) “Now they have a lot more livable space.”

“We now have a complete family room, kids’ play area, laundry room, all new mechanical systems and a roughed-in bathroom,” Leitner says.

And on Saturday mornings, while the couple sleeps in their very own getaway, the kids can play in their very own playroom. ♦

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