



# STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

A top realtor taps his abundant resources to create a home with efficiency in both form and function.

BY SHERRY MOELLER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MORGAN HOWARTH

"THE FUTURE IS NOW," says Marc Fleisher, owner of a custom-designed home in Bethesda, Maryland. And Fleisher should know. As one of the top realtors in the country, he's constantly evaluating the state of the real estate market both locally and nationally, as well as viewing just about every style, shape, and size of home imaginable. The ideal when building today is to use high-quality, eco-friendly materials, and homeowners are incorporating technological gadgets not only to save the environment, but also to save time: Networked systems, advanced audio/visual systems, and sound technology that work together are key components.

But custom-designing a home, even with Fleisher's expert knowledge of the industry, can be a bit daunting. To expedite the process, Fleisher chose the team of Mark Giarraputo and Sean Mullin of Studio Z Design Concepts, whose work he'd admired over the years. "I saw myriad floor plans Mark and Sean had designed and pieced together what I liked," says Fleisher. "We modified the proportions and came up with a new design."

#### MAXIMIZING SPACES

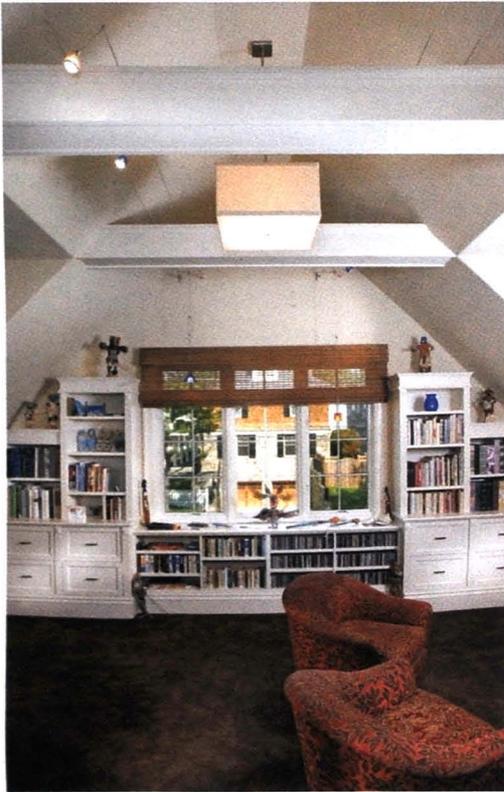
Before Fleisher could begin building the home, he had to grade the yard and install the pool on the small but conveniently located infill lot in Bethesda. "Location drives so much of this," Fleisher notes. Coming from a two-acre lot to this smaller site meant that Fleisher had to find a way to incorporate privacy. A tree-lined walking path helped, but Cynthia Ferranto, principal of Cynthia Ferranto Landscape Design, collaborated with Fleisher to make the landscape work not only for him, but also for his neighbors. "The landscaping that would affect the streetscape was done in consultation with my neighbors, so

that their sides of the yard would be as nice as mine," Fleisher says. "We maximized every square inch of the outside landscape. Also, the grade isn't raised more than 18 inches in the back, which makes the flow [between the exterior and interior] easier."

Installing the pool also created some construction challenges, says Richard Mandell, one of three partners at Sandy Spring Builders. "The key for me as the builder was Marc's willingness to have input from the building architects, landscape architects, and interior designer from the beginning," Mandell says. "The whole environment was put together so that the outside was part of the inside.... We knew what we were doing before we started."

OPPOSITE PAGE: An auto court in front of the new, custom-built French-country-style home moves it back from the street, giving the impression that it's been there for years. BELOW: Cynthia Ferranto, Marc Fleisher, Richard Mandell, Sean C. Mullin, and Mark L. Giarraputo.





### ROOMS TO LIVE BY

As for the interior, Fleisher knew he wanted an owner's suite, a good-size kitchen/family room combination, and a separate formal dining room.

"I was looking for livability, not on a large scale but on a comfortable scale," he says. "I chose quality over quantity," Fleisher adds, putting money into such items as hot-water radiant-heated flooring and rooms he uses daily.

Depending on the time of day, Fleisher's favorite places in the house are the main-floor office—*or command center*—and the second-

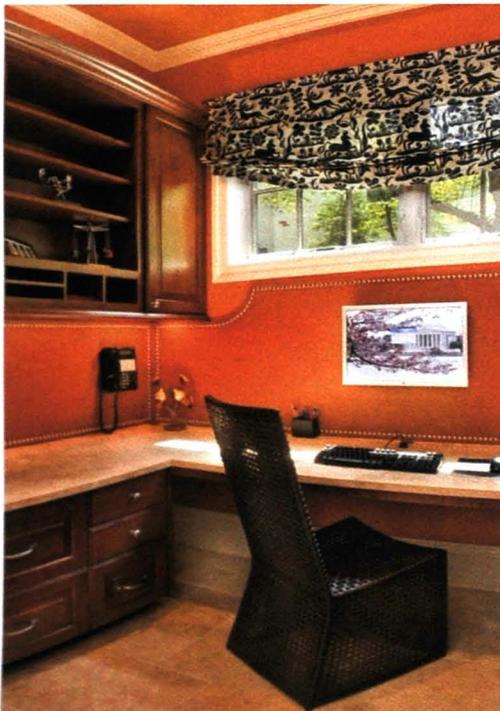
floor family room/office. There is also a separate game room that he enjoys, while his children take full advantage of the theater downstairs.

"You can still get the home you want on a budget," Fleisher adds. And affordable and convenient sites for new homes are still available. There's some opportunity right now to find homes closer to the city, he says, but not as many as there once were. While the DC market is typically insulated from the rest of the country's housing woes, Fleisher says that the local real estate market is still relatively strong.

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ABOVE: Amy Collins with Pro Kitchens designed the kitchen that features Golden Ray granite, Jerusalem limestone, and custom Woodmode cabinetry. SubZero, Miele, Wolf, and Marvel are the appliance brands selected. OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The second-floor family room/office features display space for mementos from Fleisher's travels and a cathedral ceiling that was conceptualized on-site by the team; the first-floor family room includes South American chestnut-wood flooring, a fireplace made of Mill Creek Valley stone (installed by Seneca Stone), and a coffered ceiling by Sandy Spring Builders; the main-floor office or command center makes checking messages and mail during the day convenient. Walls are painted with Benjamin Moore Pumpkin Spice. Most of the walls in the rest of the house are painted French White.



### THE FOUR-SIDED HOME

While Fleisher's house is new, it blends with the established homes along the street and doesn't dominate the streetscape. The house is set back on the property, making it look as if it has been there for years. "Old silver maples create an excellent mood and give the property patina," Ferranto says.

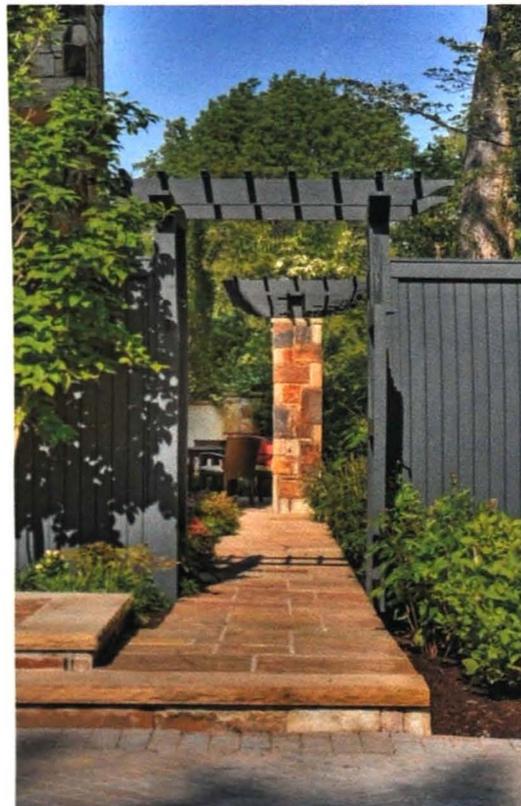
Mandell was instrumental in choosing the stone for the façade, which gives the home its French-country look. He suggested brown-toned Mill Creek Valley stone from West Virginia. "It made all the difference," Fleisher says.

"It's a four-sided house, not two-sided," Giarraputo explains. "That's key to this lot."

"It's beautiful from every side," Ferranto adds.

"I relied on everyone's skills to make this home come together," Fleisher says. Often ideas that occur along the way, such as noticing that the second-floor family-room ceiling could be vaulted instead of flat, take the design from good to exceptional. "Input from different parties makes for a better house," Giarraputo says.

"It starts with an insightful owner," Mandell says. "If you believe in a team approach, the end results are better." ★



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: The home's faux-finished walls and ceilings were done by Maggie O'Neill with O'Neill Studios. The aged metallic weave effect on the dining room walls was achieved with four layers of paint. Wainscoting by Caseworks, and a custom chandelier made by Laura Lee Designs that was created by interior designer Christina Kra of CK Interiors complete the room's décor; The bedroom is enveloped in chocolate, copper, and cream to create a calm and warm environment. Fleisher worked with Kra to select window treatments designed by CK Interiors through Yardstick Interiors and furnishings that fit his personality and lifestyle; Fencing by Walpole Woodworkers along the side walkway matches the color of the exterior trim, creating unity between the house and the landscaping.



The pool by Alpine Pool and the patio were built before the house was erected on this small, but conveniently located Bethesda site.