



Get Small

HOME DOWNSIZING
WITHOUT COMPRISING

BY GERRI LEWIS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HULYA KOLABAS



NICE MOVE Stacy Martin thought it must be karma when she found a house large enough to entertain, but still a manageable size with an open floor plan and on a scenic road.



JUST RIGHT Favorite furnishings like the round dining table fit perfectly into the new space. Drapes were repurposed to fit. Light fixtures and accessories from Olley Court gave the furnishings a fresh look. A large sectional, one of their few purchases, fits snugly into the open floor plan.

WHEN STACY MARTIN FIRST SET HER EYES on a not-so-big house on Silver Spring Road with a charming turret and private setting, she thought, this is Karma. She and her husband, Michael, already had a terrific home, one where they raised their two sons and hosted many gatherings for their large extended family. But once the youngest was off to college, the house felt oversized and empty.

Deciding that it wasn't "where they lived" that counted as much as being together, the Martins began to look around, never dreaming they would find a smaller house that suited them so perfectly. Their wish list included a more manageable sized home with less yard maintenance than the traditional house they had. They wanted a casual floor plan, but still big enough to entertain their family and friends comfortably. A first-floor master was a must. They wanted a large kitchen because many of their family events center around cooking. And they also wanted a convenient commute.

Michael works as a financial analyst in Stamford. Stacy sold the pharmaceutical research firm she started and has since begun a new startup, Strategic Solutions, which she calls an "evolving company" that coaches small business owners. Much of her time is spent in Manhattan.

Stacy has an entrepreneurial streak with a bit of a risk-taker personality so walking away from a home filled with half a lifetime of history didn't bother her as long as her family was happy. What did bother her was that she and Michael would be selling a large house in a difficult market. The Martins weren't unrealistic about the challenge they faced, but they also knew that there were other interested buyers and the Silver Spring Road house would not last long. So, with the encouragement of their two sons who loved the house from the moment they saw it, the Martins jumped in.



AT HOME A large bright kitchen was on the wish list. Robin Curnan from Olley Court and Donna Waring, who did the floral arrangements, helped with the decorating. Three large stretched photos by Chris Rexon fill the kitchen dining space.



While ownership of two homes was stressful until the larger house sold, they knew they made the right decision. The house had the desired open floor plan with a second floor they rarely had to visit giving plenty of private space for their boys and their guests. It had plenty of room for entertaining including an ample sized kitchen, the place where their family loves to gather. Set on a peaceful scenic road with a convenient commute to both Stamford and Manhattan, it also had a small private yard backing up to open space.

In spite of its appeal, there were downsides. The kitchen cabinets were dark. There was only one oven—a challenge for a family that entertains large crowds. The living space seemed too small for the comfy sectional they envisioned and the house had some dated décor. Add to that, would the furniture from a much larger more traditional home even fit in this space?

Undaunted, the Martins went to work. The first order of business was to brighten up the kitchen by painting the cabinets white. They added new lighting fixtures and painted the walls a soothing pewter. The change was dramatic making the kitchen light, bright and welcoming. Their kitchen table fit ideally into the eating alcove where three unique stretched photographs by local artist Chris Rexon add a splash of bold color to the room. This, says Stacy, is where she and Michael spend most of their time. In fact, they love the kitchen so much that the single oven trade-off was a small price to pay.

A palette of gray hues painted throughout the house transformed it from tired to trendy. Benjamin Moore



UPPER LEVEL A first-floor master suite was a must. The bedroom opens to a large deck and has a see-through gas fireplace that lights with a flick of the switch.



Litchfield Gray turned out to be the perfect neutral backdrop for the Martin's artwork, collected from the local artists they enjoy.

Donna Waring of Olley Court helped find solutions for some of the more challenging areas like a very small powder room. A mirror now covers both walls above the small vanity making the tiny room feel more spacious. Dated fixtures were replaced with more modern versions. Unique accessories like a twisted drift wood floor lamp and the unexpected pops of color found throughout enhance the décor. Many of the things were repurposed from their former home. Even the curtains were reconfigured and Stacy says everything fits like it was bought for the space.

Stacy was skeptical when the designer Park Monceau in Westport measured for an oversized sectional, the one major piece of furniture they would have to buy, but she was excited with the outcome. The sectional fits perfectly offering the comfy seating around the fireplace and TV they had hoped for.

It was a great relief that the family's favorite round dining table fit so well into the open living/dining area because as Stacy says, "Dinner conversations are different on a round table because you can talk to everyone. There have been many lively discussions around this table."

One of their favorite features of the new house is the first floor master and bath. There is a two sided gas fireplace and while the Martins miss having a "real fire," they love the convenience of just turning it on. Best of all, the master suite is just a few steps from the rest of the main floor.

After one year, the smaller house has proved to be tailored for the Martins' evolving lifestyle. As Stacy says, "it may not be forever, but for now it's great." ■

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