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## News from the Neighbors

**Craig & Diana C.**  
*Forest Hills Neighborhood (Indianapolis, IN)*

### **Remodeler's Corner**

by Lisa Floreancig  
*The Indianapolis Star* — Sunday, Real Estate

Meeting the housing needs for a growing family can be a lofty venture. There are many questions to answer... but, "is there enough room for my motorcycles" typically is not one of them. Yet, for Craig C., that question continued to swirl in his head as he and his wife Diana purchased their home in the Forest-Hills neighborhood of Meridian Kessler.

Their house, a two-story, three-bedroom brick colonial, was ample, but it had only a very small, two-car garage in the back — definitely not enough room for Craig's long-time hobby.

"I ride motorcycles, and I like to have all of those things inside, tucked away. I also like to have garage space so I can work on my cars, so the existing garage was not going to cut it," said Craig.

Touring their neighborhood to learn who-was-doing-what and who was doing the work, the couple developed a short list of five remodelers and began the interview process explaining what was needed and learning what was possible.

Creativity and dedication proved to be the hallmark for the couple, and Joe Stilwell, owner of Stilwell, LLC Architectural Design & Custom Remodeling, came out on top. It was Stilwell's creative ideas in the Design Phase of the project that were the impetus for morphing their initial idea of adding a third garage bay to adding the garage bay and a full second-story over the new and existing garage.

While Craig's focus was clearly on his motorcycles, Diana was more interested in better utilization of the space over the garages.

The attic space over the existing garage had previously been converted into a makeshift fourth bedroom/home office with very low sloped ceilings. Initially, they were just hoping to continue this space over the new garage bay, giving them a little more room in the cramped space. "I'm 6'-4", and I could only walk straight down the middle of the fourth bedroom without hitting my head; if I went to the left or right two feet, I was smacking my head on the ceiling," said Craig.

Stilwell recommended building a full second-story extending over the existing garage and the new garage bay. Not only would this better maintain the architectural integrity of the 70-year-old house,



*before*



*after*

but Craig would be able to walk through the new rooms without head injury. "Lifting the walls created so much additional useable space that we were able to gain a true fourth bedroom, a very large home office, and a hallway down what is now the west side of the addition," said Diana. "Now you don't have to walk through any room to get to another room. For resale purposes, it will pay for itself because of that additional 'legitimate' bedroom."

Before Stilwell's team could begin the project, some housekeeping was needed, namely, obtaining the necessary variances and ensuring property line set backs were respected. Stilwell, a master of working creatively with existing homes, went to work making certain the paperwork was completed and the project fit within the parameters of the client's property.

"During the middle of construction, a neighbor who was also doing some remodeling came over and asked me what we did to get our property line set backs squared away. I said, 'To be honest, I don't know. My builder handled it all,'" said Craig. "It turned out that the building inspector showed up at their project and shut it down because it was not in compliance."

With the new garage bay and addition nearing completion, the only thing left was for Stilwell to apply the finishing touches. "Initially, I was nervous about how the finished rooms might look because some builders are not into whether the overall look and style of the project matches the house," said Diana. Stilwell said, "Throughout both the Design Phase and the Remodeling Phase our primary goal is to create a project that enhances the existing home. We excel at matching existing moulding and millwork details, and the character of a home." Said Craig, "And he did it. He pulled it off. We are very happy, and the motorcycles are very happy, too."

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