



# FULL CIRCLE

An architect gives his original  
McGuffey Hill design a makeover





BY LAUREL FEINMAN

Photography by Virginia Hamrick

Charlottesville offers everything a second homeowner might be looking for: it's an idyllic university town with all the amenities of a much larger cosmopolitan area, with access to great health care and an easy commute to some of the most vibrant cities in the Northeast.

Ann Hay Hardy, of Frank Hardy Realtors, is a real estate broker who specializes in luxury home sales—including second homes. She says that many of Charlottesville's second homeowners eventually decide to move here permanently, after beginning their adventure here as weekend or game-day visitors. Hardy says, "Our restaurants, culture, history, music scene, boutiques and local farming have a broad appeal."

Second homeowners in Charlottesville will often dip into the condominium and townhouse market first, because so many come with convenient property management and housekeeping services—important amenities if you live elsewhere most of the year.





The McGuffey Hill condominiums are one such hotspot for second homeowners, tucked into a wooded hillside one block north of the Downtown Pedestrian Mall, next to the McGuffey Art Center. From here, it's a pleasant walk to some of Charlottesville's favorite performance venues, boutiques and restaurants.

Architect, designer and town planner Frank Folsom Smith—UVA alumnus and avid sports fan—saw McGuffey Hill's potential back in the early-80s when he first designed the development. That hunch proved even sweeter when, 30-some-odd years later, he purchased one of his original units to become his new home-away-from-home.

This time around, Frank has wife Anne—an award-winning interior designer in her own right—to help him on the condo's redesign work. Frank and Anne Folsom Smith live in Sarasota, Florida, but are so frequently in town that they have maintained a second residence in Charlottesville for over 30 years. Anne jokes, "If runs, dribbles, can be caught or hit, we come to town to watch it."

Frank favors a contemporary aesthetic in his architectural design; evidence of this can be seen in the two-bedroom/two-bathroom apartment's clean lines and open floor plan. Anne helped Frank update the look by giving the living room a complete facelift and applying her design expertise in a few other key areas as well.

The former, rather traditional-looking fireplace and mantel was replaced with new built-in oak cabinetry that has a pickled finish and a black granite surround. Anne explains, "It's a small space, only about 1300 square feet with traditional 8-foot tall

ceilings. The polished granite helps reflect light, convey warmth and anchor the living room."

The new bookshelves wrap around the corner of the living room into the dining nook and house Anne's extensive library of mystery books (her guilty pleasure). The new raised hearth accommodates several beautiful orchids, potted in baskets and bowls. Frank says that back home in Sarasota, Anne maintains an orchid house and is passionate about their stylistic beauty.

The living room opens onto a spacious terrace, which is set with a large teak dining table and chairs, comfortably seating eight. Large sliding glass doors allow the two spaces to virtually become one when the doors are open.

Just prior to the sale of the condo, its previous owner had updated the kitchen with new appliances and new flooring, so the Folsom Smiths' focus has been on updating the living room, the bathrooms, closets and the master suite upstairs. When it came time to do the construction work, they didn't have to look far; their son-in-law is Glen Robertson of Smith and Robertson custom home builders.

Also downstairs is a fully outfitted guest bedroom, complete with a vanity table under a sunny skylight. Anne says that she has her eye on that spot as a great place to possibly install a desk, transforming that room into a home office.

Anne says that the most practical improvements to the home started with the guest bedroom's closets, which led to updates in all of the closets throughout the rest of the space. Anne says that the closets—many of which were created out of the deep insets that resulted from the condo's modern, sloping roofline—weren't living up to their full potential and were underutilized.



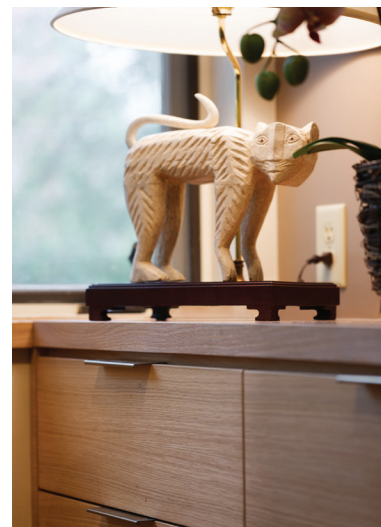
Now, they are outfitted with organization systems and can hold even more, better.

The most extensive renovations occurred in the Smiths' two bathrooms. Anne says, "Anyone who has ever renovated a bathroom knows that it feels the same as renovating an entire house due to the number of contractors, subcontractors and fixtures required in that space."

The contemporary guest bathroom downstairs features new custom cabinetry made of maple with a lacquered "aniline" finish. Anne says that aniline dye is a great finish choice for cabinetry and furniture when you want to highlight the wood's grain. The lacquered finish provides great shine and durability. Countertops in the bathrooms are a filled and honed travertine limestone. Its non-reflective, matte surface offers a soft contrast to the cabinets' highly polished wooden cases.

Anne demonstrates that many of the cabinet interiors in the guest bath are outfitted with convenient organizational systems, like built-in hampers and soft-touch mechanisms that help close the drawers after a gentle nudge. The most unique feature in the bathroom cabinetry is in the roomy drawer under the sink—a space often lost due to plumbing fixtures. The Folsom Smiths' clever cabinetmaker built in a special notch to accommodate the plumbing so they didn't have to sacrifice the space's storage potential.





Upstairs, the Folsom Smiths' renovations required that some of the walls be rearranged, resulting in a larger master bathroom and an improved layout. Any space that may have been sacrificed in the already-very-large master bedroom during this transformation was put to great use in the new bathroom, when a large dual vanity was installed along with a built-in chest of drawers on the opposite wall under a skylight. Both cabinets "float" a foot above the floor to enhance the feeling of space and provide special storage spaces. Frank, knowing how much Anne loves taking a soak, was thrilled to further update the bathroom by installing a new large soaking tub for her.

Outside of the master bedroom is another terrace. Although considerably smaller than the terrace outside the living room, the bedroom terrace delivers big style. The furniture is oversized, funky and mod. The brightly colored, molded plastic lounge chair and sofa came from Design Within Reach, designed by Philippe Starck. The rug is made of plastic, but surprisingly has the soft hand-feel of natural fibers.

Anne and Frank Folsom Smith are typical of many second homeowners in Charlottesville: people who seamlessly work, live and play in both of their hometowns—effectively blurring the lines between "visitor" and "resident." It is Charlottesville's hope that all second homeowners in our area feel that same level of affinity and kinship and consider themselves "at home" when they're here in Charlottesville. [H](#)