

Living Here



A Chappaqua couple worked with Bedford-based architect and interior designer Carol Kurth to transform the home from what had been an industrial-tech home, complete with gray carpet and walls, into a Craftsman style beauty.

BUY. GUT. REDO.

High-tech interior wasn't a dream house deal breaker

Getting the house of your dreams doesn't always mean finding it ready-made. A potential dream home with all the requirements *except* a dream interior can still be a contender. When Gail Singer and Matthew Levitan faced that dilemma 18 years ago, the imperfect interior of the home they found in Chappaqua wasn't a deal-breaker — its ideal location and setting more than made up for what was missing.

Cover story 4,5G



The distinctive front double doors were part of the renovation, making the entry larger. The insulated glass let in light while making a grand statement. MARK VERGARI/THE JOURNAL NEWS

LOHUD.COM/LIVINGHERE

What's online

Blogs: Music mogul Monte Lipman, founder of Republic Records and president and chief operating officer of Universal Republic Music, apparently enjoys suburban living. Lipman has reportedly closed on a nearly 12-acre property in Katonah. Read more at realestate.lohudblogs.com
Home of the week: The first home ever featured in 'House Beautiful' sold in just one day on the market. What's amazing? It was featured in the 1896 edition of the magazine. Find photos and more details.
Before & After: Follow a re-upholstery job, from start to finish.
Videos: Take a 360-degree look inside dozens of dream homes, including a Chappaqua Craftsman and a home right on the Hudson River in South Nyack.



Visit our neighborhoods: Learn more about more than five dozen neighborhoods in the Lower Hudson Valley through video tours.
Follow us on Twitter: realstate@lohud. Follow Karen Croke@LivingHereNY; Bill Cary @LoHudGardening.
Resource list: Need a plumber or a painter or a paver? Find local experts.
Get digital access: To see bonus features on your tablet, iPad or iPhone, such as photo galleries, panoramic tours and more, home-delivery subscribers need to activate their online account. Go to lohud.com and follow the prompts. Not a subscriber? Take advantage of our 99-cent per month deal. Details at lohud.com.
Open houses, homes for sale and rent: Find local listings, plus recent sales and schools data.

My Neighborhood



Good schools, open spaces, friendly neighbors: Dobbs Ferry checks all the boxes on Maria Carluccio's must-have list. **2G**

Ask The Master Gardener

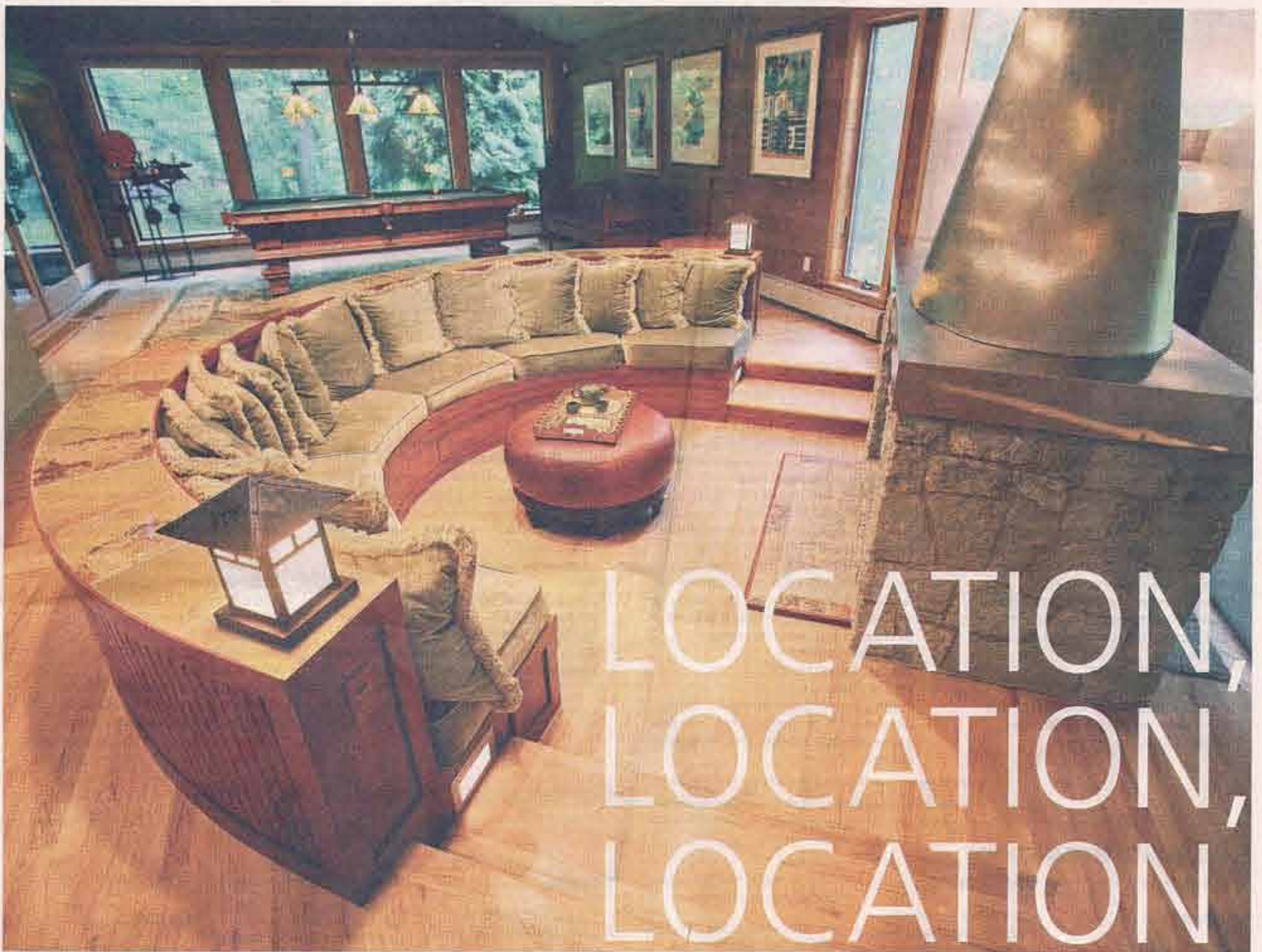


The allure of fresh herbs: Not all varieties require full sun. **Plus:** Coming Up, Do it Now, **6G**

Price Points



Sit and stay awhile: Homes with rocking chair porches in Bronxville, Pearl River, Mahopac and Chappaqua. **3G**



LOCATION,
LOCATION,
LOCATION

The spacious family room wrapped in cherry wainscoting was left intact during renovations. The double-sided fireplace is topped by a dramatic metal chimney.

PHOTOS BY MARK VERGARI/THE JOURNAL NEWS

An ideal address and lots of wide open space convinced this couple to undertake a major renovation

By Karen Odom
For The Journal News

Gail Singer and her husband, Matthew Levitan, knew they had found THE house when they saw the modern four-bedroom home perched on a ridge at 33 Whipoorwill Lake Road in Chappaqua. Location, location, location — the longstanding real estate mantra — never meant more. This property had everything they wanted: ideal location (Check), coveted public school system (Check), a family-oriented community (Check), and a decidedly un-Colonial architectural style (Check). Everything on their wish list but an interior style that suited them.

What's a potential buyer to do? Buy, gut and redo. That's where Singer and Levitan found themselves in 1995. Four renovation projects later, they had their dream house. With twin daughters now grown and on the West Coast, the house is on the market for \$1.5 million.

"The main attraction was the location," Singer recalls. "The property is on a two-acre piece of property, but we're surrounded by more than 150 acres of parkland, which is rare in Chappaqua, with a lake across the street. From the house, we can't see the neighboring house and no one can build behind us or on either side."

That perfect location also put them squarely in the desirable Chappaqua school system. "We didn't want to pay for private schools," Singer adds.

Even with lots to like, the house itself was far from perfect, despite the appeal of its large indoor spaces. "The house had been built in 1981 in a high-tech industrial style," Singer explains. "It had industrial gray walls and most of the flooring was gray — industrial gray tiles and industrial gray carpeting."

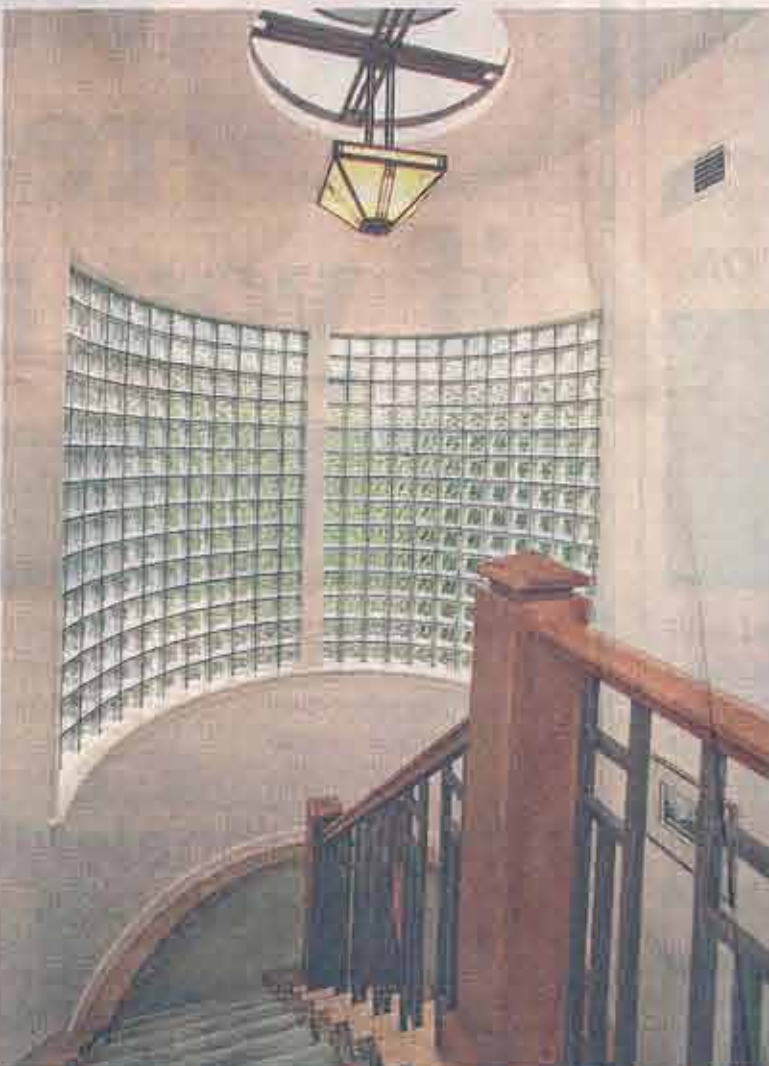
Singer and Levitan set to work, embarking on what would become a prolonged renovation adventure to turn the 5,201 square-foot high-tech industrial interior into a warm, refined, modern Craftsman style.

"To me, that high-tech look worked well in a New York City apartment," says Singer. "But here, surrounded by so much



LIKE THIS MODERN CHAPPAQUA RETREAT?
Address: 33 Whipoorwill Lake Road, Chappaqua
Price: \$1.5 million, with annual property taxes estimated at \$41,500
MLS No.: 3301504
Contact: Joanne Georgiou, 914-584-9408, Houlihan Lawrence, www.houlihanlawrence.com

The first floor has an open plan with the kitchen and dining areas flowing into the living room and adjacent game room, which has a pool table.



A curved glass wall wraps the staircase. "The house had been built in 1981 in a high-tech industrial style," says Gail Singer. The couple gave it an overhaul adding Craftsman touches such as the overhead light and Frank Lloyd Wright inspired balustrade.



Even the bathrooms were renovated from high-tech to a more warm and welcoming feel with elegant marble, neutral colors and dark wood accents.



The house, which is surrounded by 150 acres of open space is near a lake, great for boating in summer and skating in winter. PHOTOS MARK VERGARI/THE JOURNAL NEWS

green, I wanted it to be more of a continuation of the outside. I wanted a more refined look and feel — something more sophisticated and less chunky than the traditional Craftsman style.”

Inspired by Singer's Southern California roots and Levitan's admiration of the Craftsman style, they worked with Bedford-based architect and interior designer Carol Kurth to transform the home into the modern beauty it is today.

The sweeping changes began at the front door — that gorgeous post-renovation lattice, distinctive front double doors with insulated glass that let in light while making a grand statement. They open to a large entryway with a floor of multicolor slate imported from India with rust, sage and tan tones that also set the tone for what's in store throughout — a warm, sophisticated interior that's open and airy without being stark. The same slate is carried through in the screened sunroom, the main-floor powder room and the dining room's buffet counter.

“We changed the entrance by pulling out the front to create a bigger entryway with more of an impact,” Singer explains.

The entry presents two navigation choices — straight to the cathedral-ceilinged living room/family room and dining room common area or right to the circular front stairway with custom Frank Lloyd Wright-style wrought-iron balusters and cherry railings framed by a glass block wall, a Frank Lloyd Wright-style light fixture and a window cut-out.

Reinforcing the openness are the abundance of light from oversized windows and extra-wide hallways.

At the top of the stairway is the luxurious master bedroom suite — a self-contained heavenly hideaway that features a custom walk-in closet, built-in coffee/wine bar (who wouldn't want coffee in the morning or wine at night without ever leaving your bedroom?), a step-down sitting room with built-in shelving, a rear stairway to three more ensuite bedrooms on the first level, and a spacious private deck. The original patio off the living room and dining room was redesigned into a screened porch and the master bedroom deck added above it.

One room was converted to a dedicated office designed by Kurth and featured in a Taunton



The master bedroom suite has some expected features, such as a custom walk-in closet and beautiful ensuite bathroom. But it also has a built-in coffee/wine bar and an outdoor deck.

RESOURCES

Turning the less-than-ideal high-tech interior into a model of custom Craftsman design took a team of experts from construction to interior design.

Architect and interior designer: Carol Kurth of Carol Kurth Architecture & Interiors (644 Old Post Road, Bedford, 914-234-2595, www.carolkurtharchitects.com), a full-service architectural and interior design firm, led the way in transforming the home's high-tech interior into a warm, sophisticated Craftsman style.

Interior decorating: For some of the decorative finishing touches, including the firepit sofa makeover, stairway carpeting, and certain window treatments, Singer brought in Mary Santore and her specialty firm Enchanted Designs (10 Apple Hill Lane, Chappaqua, 914-238-3839).

Construction: Sunrise Building & Remodelling Inc. (510 N. State Road, Briarcliff Manor, 914-762-8453, www.sunrise-building.com), specializing in renovations and fine craftsmanship, brought its expertise and experienced craftsmen to the detailed renovation project, including artisan Sebastian DiSalvo, who expertly installed distinctive custom tilework in the entryway and main-floor bathrooms. “He's a true artisan,” Singer says of DiSalvo. “He went through all of the slate, picked the best pieces and painstakingly laid them out in a very inviting mosaic pattern. He was very particular where each piece was placed.”

Landscaping: Perennial Gardens (414 Old Post Road, Bedford, 914-234-6311, www.perennialgardensny.com) delivered on Singer's desire for a mostly green landscape. “I didn't want to do a lot of work to maintain it,” Singer says of her preference for green plantings. An additional consideration: the home's siting on a granite ledge.

Press book by workplace designer and architect Neil Zimmerman — “At Work At Home: Design Ideas for Your Home Workplace” published in 2001. “I needed the space for working from home to keep organized and separate from the rest of the family when I needed to concentrate.”

Attention was given to every possible detail —

every door handle was handcrafted; under-stair rope lighting was installed on the steps connecting the master bedroom and sitting room; high-tech bathrooms were updated to elegant marble; and one master bedroom wall was lined with custom mirrored storage. And that industrial gray carpeting? Gone! It was replaced by



Carol Kurth designed the home's dedicated office space, which was featured in a Taunton Press book by workplace designer and architect Neil Zimmerman — “At Work At Home: Design Ideas for Your Home Workplace” published in 2001.

white oak hardwood floors, with the addition of Brazilian cherry inlays in the main hallway. The kitchen with its adjoining breakfast area is the only space that remains in its original high-tech state.

Singer left the unique built-in comfortably cozy curved firepit sofa wrapped with cherry wainscoting (a centerpiece of the main floor) with its dramatic place-

ment in front of the double-sided fireplace topped by a dramatic metal chimney flue, but gave it a makeover by replacing its gray carpeting encasing and gray ultrasuede pillows with a warmer, green velvet covering. She also let the open space opposite the living room remain a dedicated pool room.

“The house has a great flow for entertaining,”

says Singer. An added bonus — it also happens to be one of the few houses with lake rights and access to boating, fishing, canoeing, ice skating and walking trails.

Singer isn't sure where she's headed next, but there's no doubt her Chappaqua home has brought her family great joy. “It's been a great space for us,” Singer states. “We loved it.”