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Remodeling association says price tag matters in projects

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Three local builders — Landis Construction, Bowa Builders and Corcoran Builders — recently received “Contractor of the Year” awards from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry for home remodeling projects in Northwest D.C.

The association grants the awards in 32 categories, and this year, Landis, Bowa and Corcoran were among the 30 design-build contracting firms in the region to receive

them. There are about 350 association members in the Washington area.

Association judge John Byrd of Home Fronts News Service, who has evaluated thousands of home renovation projects over the years, said he believes the Contractor of the Year awards have grown increasingly important to homeowners and builders alike.

“The competition has definitely gotten stronger over the years with more educated homeowners putting the onus on contractors to deliver high-quality work and to stay within the set budgets,” Byrd said.

He said that, unlike awards from organizations such as the American Institute of Architects, the Contractor of the Year judges consider budget as important a factor as design. Another key fac-

tor is evidence that the contractor used creative problem-solving approaches.

Nationally, about \$250 billion a year is spent on improvements to homes, and according to Byrd, homeowners in D.C. are definitely getting their money’s worth. A recent study in Remodeling Magazine ranked 60 markets for the best return on home-improvement investment, and the Washington area ranked the highest in nearly every category.

For work on a Wesley Heights Tudor home, Bowa Builders won the association’s grand award for “Best Residential Addition, \$100,000 to \$250,000.” The owners wanted a larger, more modern kitchen with enough space for an adjoining breakfast room, along with improved access to the deck and back yard.

Project manager Rich Cassagnol said there were several aspects that made this kitchen project a challenge. Matching the traditional styling of the Tudor home to the owners’ passion for modern European interior decor required innovative design solutions. In the kitchen, the contractor used aluminum and wood-veneered Bulthaup cabinetry from

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Courtesy of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry

Bowa Builders won an award for this kitchen, with an adjoining breakfast room, in Wesley Heights.

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Germany for a clean, minimalist look.

“The cabinet measurements were European, and it was quite a



Courtesy of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry

Landis Construction won an award for this media room in Chevy Chase.

complicated system to install,” recalled Cassagnol. “The whole project required an extraordinary

amount of precision.”

Another challenge included incorporating three different materials for the countertops — quartz, stainless steel and wood.

Interesting millwork also contributed to the home’s award-winning design. For example, access

from the dining room to the kitchen is through a swinging door on a specialized hinge. “When the door is closed, you would never know it was there from the dining room side,” said Cassagnol. “The effect is like that of a false door.” Another award-winning design came from

Landis Construction, for a media room in a home in Chevy Chase. Architect and company co-owner

Chris Landis was the project manager on the renovation, in which the floor-plan reconfiguration united a series of spaces in the rear of the classic 1940s Chevy Chase brick house.

Byrd called the space “cozy, with nicely defined spaces that help create a warm ambience.” The owners of the home are media consultants and had a strong idea of

the results they wanted.

The requirements for the media center award call for a remodeled space that incorporates audio and video equipment. According to the judges, the Chevy Chase design presented notably tasteful, even understated, design solutions that “nicely elaborate the architectural vocabulary of the existing home.”

Corcoran Builders received the

association’s “Best Entire House Under \$250,000” award for a town-house project in Northwest. Details were not available.

Cassagnol said he believes the Contractor of the Year program is tremendously important. “These awards keep us on pace with our peers,” he said. “It also helps us to stand out and distinguish ourselves.”