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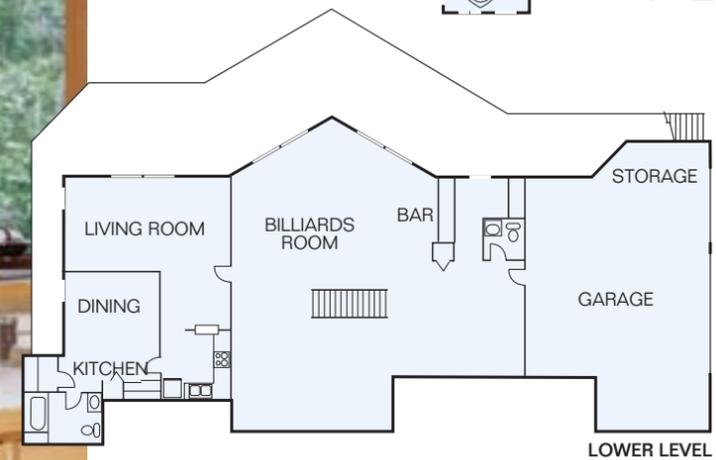
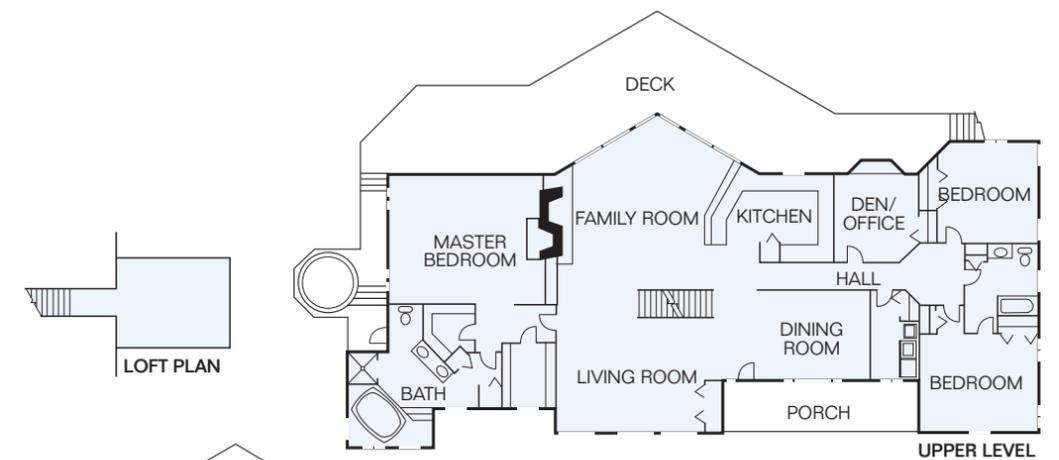
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Perfect planning

A Pennsylvania couple took a disciplined approach to design their multi-purpose log home

By Ronda Mollica > Photos by James Ray Spahn > Styling by Colleen Macomber > Produced by Kelley Marketing



PLAN NAME: Cichelli custom plan

Square footage: 3,000 1st floor, 150 loft, + 3,000 lower level

bedrooms: 4

bathrooms: 3.5

Producer: International Homes of Cedar

Builder: Bridlewood Builders, Harrisburg, PA

Exterior walls: Flat profile engineered inland western red cedar 5x8 timber

Foundation: Superior Walls

Fireplace: Natural stone

Cabinets: Hickory, by Blue Mountain Woodworking

Making your way through the home planning process can be arduous and time consuming. With so many decisions to make about size, location of private and public spaces, and even the number of bedrooms, it's important to allow enough time up front to design your home properly.

This was not a problem for Richard and Martha Cichelli, of Nazareth, Pennsylvania, who always had their sights on building a dream home. For them, the planning process was part of the excitement and kept the dream alive.

Richard, a draftsman at an architectural firm in the 1960s, had designed more than 150 homes for others. He also created a rough sketch of what would be the beginnings of a home plan for himself and Martha.

Three major considerations were crucial to the Cichellis' plan:

- First, they wanted plenty of room for their varied hobbies and passions. This included music, woodworking, and cooking, all of which would be given the supportive square footage within the home.
- The second factor was their affinity for entertaining large groups. The Cichellis regularly entertain business clients, social

RIGHT: A hillside view of the rural Pennsylvania home shows the natural mix of Western red cedar, glu-lam timbers and stone veneer. A combination of Dutch gable and prow roof-lines gives the home an architectural edge.
BELOW: The rustic pane front door was designed by the homeowner's nephew.



groups, and family, so allowing for large public spaces was essential. The couple also needed a space for Martha's mother, who wanted to remain as independent as possible during her retirement years.

The final requirement for the plan would be that it would sit well on a hillside lot. The geography of Northampton County, Pennsylvania, features plenty of hills and valleys, and capturing a scene with large windows and expansive decks was a no-brainer.

With the key components of the home in place, Richard began to sketch out a rough floor plan. "I first made what I call a bubble diagram," says Richard. "It shows activities in circles. I put related activities near each other."

"I next picked a [house] style. We liked our then current hillside ranch, so I stayed with that style since we had a lovely hill on which to place the house. Then I allocated floor area — in our case, about 3,000 square feet per floor."

To keep the ideas flowing, Richard picked up several plan books and searched through hundreds of layouts. He wanted a layout that offered lots of public space for large-group entertaining, but very private areas for down time.

He originally had 22 plans that fulfilled many of their requirements. Then he and Martha analyzed each space and its location in the home.

RIGHT: A stone fireplace with graceful curves accentuates the other half of the great room. The complex roofline with intersecting gables and prow allowed the fireplace to soar even higher than originally planned. **BELOW:** The great room encompasses two areas, divided by the loft's stairway in the middle. On one side is the grand piano and sound equipment and on the other is the fireplace and views of their 20-acre hillside property.



Designing for the hillside



Designing a home on a hillside can generally save you money on materials during construction. However, there can be huge site preparation costs if your hillside is more of a mountain or cliff than a gently sloping lot. Here are a few things to consider as you evaluate your property.

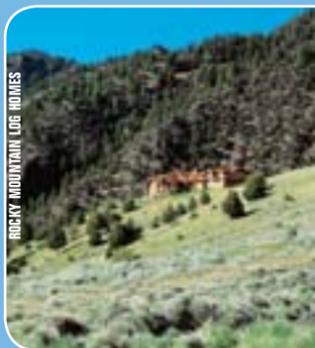
- Before you begin, ask your log home producer to inspect the site to give you a better estimate of costs. "Hitting a rock — stable or unstable — can be a problem when you start building," says Bear Creek Log Homes President Steve Petri. "You want to do a thorough soil study to find out where the bedrock is."

- Matching home and home site is critical. If the site is too steep, it may not be feasible to build a large home without major site rearrangement. "Prepping the site can be expensive," says Gary Jordan, manager of engineering and drafting for Northeastern Log Homes. "I've seen people completely take off the top of a mountain to situate their home on it. The cost could be \$150,000 just to create the site."

- You'll need to call in the structural engineers for opinions. Says Jim Young, president of Precision Craft Log Homes, "If you are building in extreme conditions, you want someone knowledgeable and capable, with the expertise to build in those areas. If we have to hang the structure out over a cliff that may be unstable, it could be costly to get footings. You may have to do a core drilling sample test to find out what's under the side of the mountain."

- Getting materials to the job site is priority number one when starting construction. Is the public road paved? Can a semi-trailer carrying your logs negotiate the turns? "You may have a fairly good main road coming up the mountain, but we have to build a driveway from the main road to your building site," says Nelson. "You may be looking at timber clearing, grading, and maybe blasting into rock outcrops."

- Water accessibility in particularly hilly areas can be very deceptive. "Your neighbors can have a 200-foot well and you can have a dry hole to the fault line," says Petri. "Talk to a local well driller and ask about the property." Make sure the property has room for a septic system and drain field to meet building codes.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN LOG HOMES



RIGHT: The kitchen is one of Martha's favorite rooms in the house. It features plenty of space to cook for a crew, natural light streaming in through picture windows, a two-tiered counter, and an open plan to stay in contact with the guests.

BELOW: Dining with the Cichellis usually involves a crowd. The spacious dining room can easily accommodate a large social dinner party or family gathering.



LEFT: The master bedroom fireplace is the back half of the two-sided great room fireplace. This structural work of art was created by a local mason, who used local stone. **BELOW:** Smart tile work brings a splash of color into the master bath.



Martha a place where she could be part of the periphery, but wouldn't need to socialize in other activities. "Out of sight, but not out of the loop," she says. A loft level was the answer.

A higher ceiling was required for the loft, which allowed larger windows and a wider view — perfect for a hillside home. The approach narrowed down the plan possibilities even further. Richard then turned to his friends at the architectural firm to help draw the final plan.

At that point, the Cichellis sought a building company that could bring the floor plan to reality. Between home shows and an open house, the Cichellis connected with Robin Loughran of Bridlewood Builders in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a representative of International Homes of Cedar.

"Richard and Martha were ready to build, but were frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm from other companies to put the home together," says Robin. "I saw their frustration and their plan and wanted to do whatever I could to make it happen."

The Cichellis loved the glu-lam engineered timber offered by International Homes of Cedar. The laminated timbers are touted as 70% stronger than natural timbers, lightweight, and resistant to pests, decay and mold. Because the wood is engineered, the timbers do not twist or crack, keeping the walls energy efficient, sturdy and good looking.

The hillside site afforded the Cichellis the benefit of an above-grade lower level and bonus living space, which went to good use when they built an apartment for Martha's mother.

"We were very thankful to have such a great space for her," says Martha. "The high ceilings and big windows in the lower level allow the sunlight to come in and keep the area cheery. She had her own kitchen and laundry and was able to live in comfort and security."

The Cichellis enjoy the ambience of the home, but the practical touches are what stand out for them. "I love the layout of the home and the look of the cedar and stone," Martha says. "I made sure to include items that would make life a little easier. I have two dishwashers in the kitchen to clean up after large gatherings, plus three laundry rooms: one near the kitchen, one in the master suite, and one in the in-law apartment."

A dumbwaiter that lifts from the garage level to the kitchen allows the family to easily transport groceries and items from downstairs without walking up a flight of stairs. Richard has shop space for woodworking and gardening.

The home is wired with Cat-5 Cabling to accommodate their extensive computer network system, which is an extension of their software business.

They also have plenty of space for their extensive library and musical instruments, including two grand pianos, a drum set, a djembe drum, and various sound equipment. Martha is treasurer of the Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra and loves to have the group over to enjoy the musical camaraderie.

"We've now lived in this wonderful home for eight years," says Richard. "It was and remains our dream home." **CBL**

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