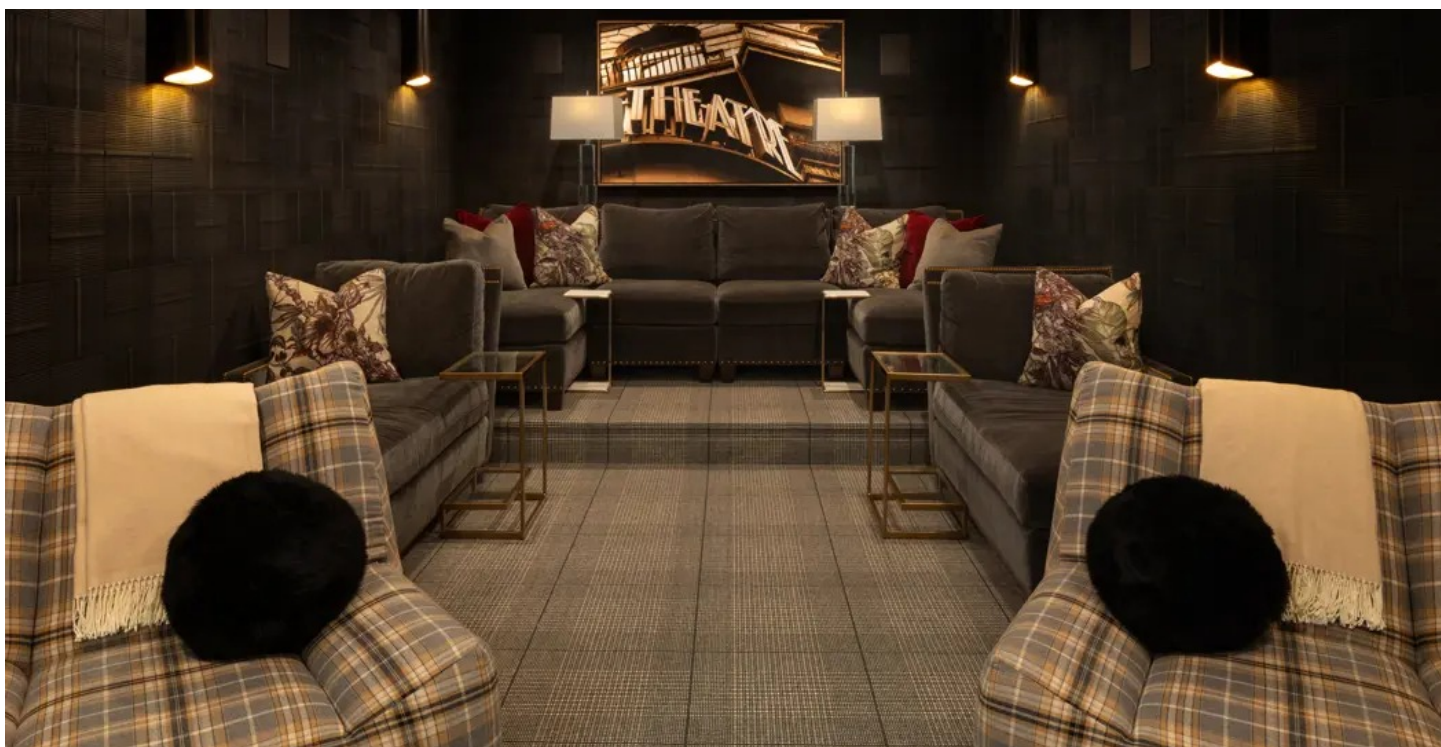


DESIGN & RENOVATIONS

This Classy Westlake Basement Has a Space for Every Activity

The entertainment-focused remodel creates a grand, inviting space that never bores.

BY LYNNE THOMPSON | JAN. 20, 2026 | 5:00 AM



PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMY CARRUTHERS

The lower level of the Westlake home looked like a lot of basements, an open space left mostly unfinished so the kids could play without scratching a hardwood floor or putting a hole in a wall. Once the homeowners' three sons had outgrown that youthful rambunctious stage, the entire family needed a place for spending quality time together that doubled as a spot for casual get-togethers.

Laura Yeager Smith of [Laura Yeager Smith Home & Design](#) recalls that the hearth room, located off the kitchen in the busy heart of the house, had become a less-than-ideal place for relaxing. And the living and dining rooms were too formal to function as hangouts. She responded by transforming the lower level into an entertaining destination that included every amenity the family wanted: a bar, gaming area, home theater, gym and spa bath complete with a steam shower, along with the requisite seating areas.

“It’s an elevated lounge,” she says of the result. “It almost feels like (that in) a boutique hotel.”



PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMY CARRUTHERS

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The location of plumbing pipes and HVAC ductwork created a ceiling of varying heights that dictated the space plan. Smith used architectural details and finishes to delineate most of the dedicated areas of activity rather than separate them with walls. A banquette tucked in a corner under a particularly low section of ceiling serves as a central focal point for guests descending one of two staircases. Smith designed the built-in with a high channel-tufted back that draws the eye up; upholstered it in navy diamond-embossed velvet; added a cherry pedestal table and two cognac leather armchairs; and illuminated the arrangement with an antique-brass fixture covered in green-colored coconut-shell disks.

“We had to scale light fixtures very strategically to make them impactful, but not feel like they were (encroaching on) the spaces,” she notes.

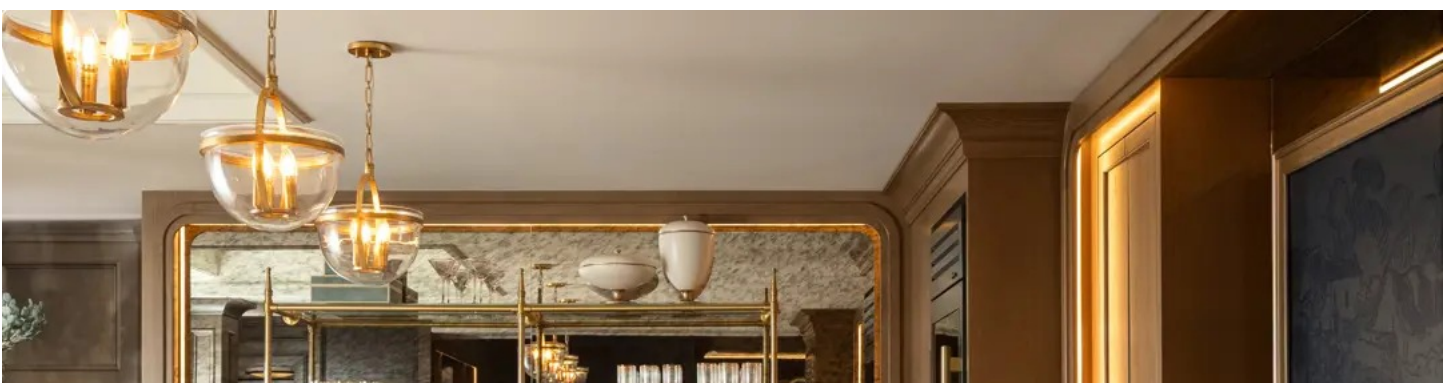




High-end finishes, fixtures and furnishings give these activity areas a more luxurious feel than the average game room. | PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMY CARRUTHERS

The banquette provides a prime view of the gaming area with its billiard and shuffleboard tables — and separates the main entertainment area from the wet bar. Smith defined the former with a beamed coffered ceiling and perimeter soffit. The small fireplace was transformed into a stunning feature approximating the scale of the lower level’s other elements by replacing the brick surround with a stretch of fluted marble that spans the entire width of the wall.

The wet bar sports quartz-topped white-oak cabinetry stained a flannel gray, mirrored backsplashes and brass-and-glass shelving units that provide a subtle contrast to the stained maple paneling covering most of the walls. Walls near one flight of stairs were covered in grass cloth to add texture and depth. But ceilings throughout the lower level were painted white; the floors were finished in an engineered white oak.



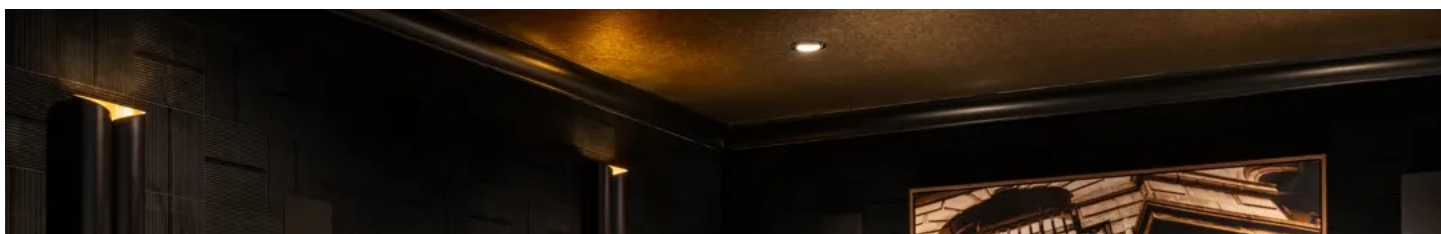


PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMY CARRUTHERS

“We wanted to combine and repeat several materials so (the lower level) had that continuity but didn’t feel boring,” Smith explains.

Smith upholstered the balance of traditional and transitional furnishings in a mix of velvet, linen-look performance fabric, leather and wool plaid in browns, creams and grays, along with touches of green and navy. Grays star in the menswear-inspired theater, which Smith finished with an acoustic wall covering that looks like textured black velvet and floored in gray plaid carpeting. A charcoal-gray velvet sectional and twin chaise lounges, along with a pair of swivel chairs upholstered in a flannel-gray-and-caramel plaid, replace the usual home-theater recliners. Yellow plays a supporting role in metallic-gold paper on the ceiling.

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMY CARRUTHERS

“I far prefer a sectional and swivel chairs to a traditional theater chair because it’s more conversational,” she says. “It allows the room to be more multipurpose than the formality of everybody sitting in rows.”

A walk-in closet installed to showcase the lady of the house’s designer wardrobe rounds out the space plan. Smith hung a crystal light fixture from a ceiling papered in an abstract rose-patterned grass cloth and painted the interiors of the white cabinets a blush pink.

“We embraced the femininity of that,” Smith says. “She’s the only female in the house.”



A stretch of fluted marble transforms a small fireplace into an eye-catching architectural feature. | PHOTOGRAPHED BY AMY CARRUTHERS

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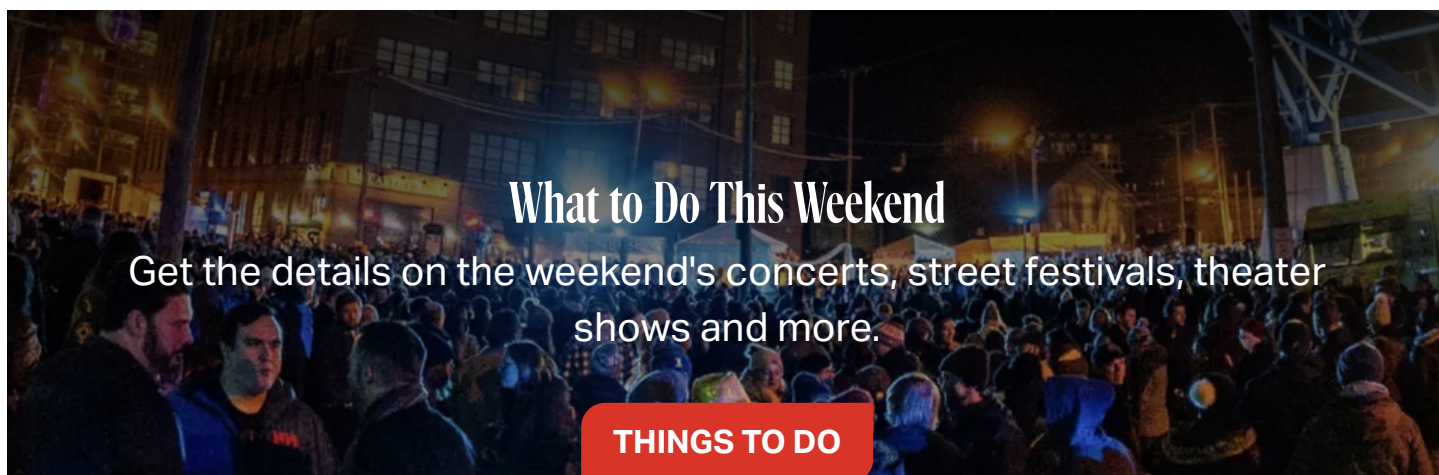
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