

MODERN MAYHEM

Cleverly combining home
renovation and real life

WRITTEN BY CHRISTINE DARRAGH | PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE DEGASPERIS

The owner of Windrush Hill Construction, Tony Alfieri, recently faced a slight dilemma at a renovation project in Port Dalhousie.

“Usually, a homeowner might stay elsewhere during a renovation this extensive, but this family really wanted to live in the house during the whole process,” he relates. When a dream intersects with reality, these are the daunting complications that might seemingly overwhelm its fulfillment. Home renovation, I’d like you to meet real life. . .

The professional couple and their three teenage boys had already lived in the Georgian style house for about seven years before deciding to achieve a transformative, contemporary design vision with the assistance of Brian Burgess, of B.E. Burgess & Associates, located in Fonthill. While their procrastination with starting the project is typical of many busy families, as Burgess recounts, “They always wanted to change the home, but never could find the time to get it done.” Once they made the decision to move ahead, the practical concern facing the builder was to not interfere too much with the family’s daily activities. ›

KITCHEN MIX UP

The former “ultra-matching” kitchen used to hold the unsavory title of “most traditional golden oak wood in the house,” but contemporary design cues now choose to juxtapose interesting materials and surfaces within the same space. The countertop and centre island gleam in white CaesarStone, a man-made quartz product, the backsplash is a linear glass and stone combination, and cabinets switch between a buff coloured, high-gloss lacquer finish and a distinct grey/brown custom stain over quarter sawn white oak. These variations naturally keep the senses engaged in the surroundings, and the kitchen an even more enjoyable place to be in.



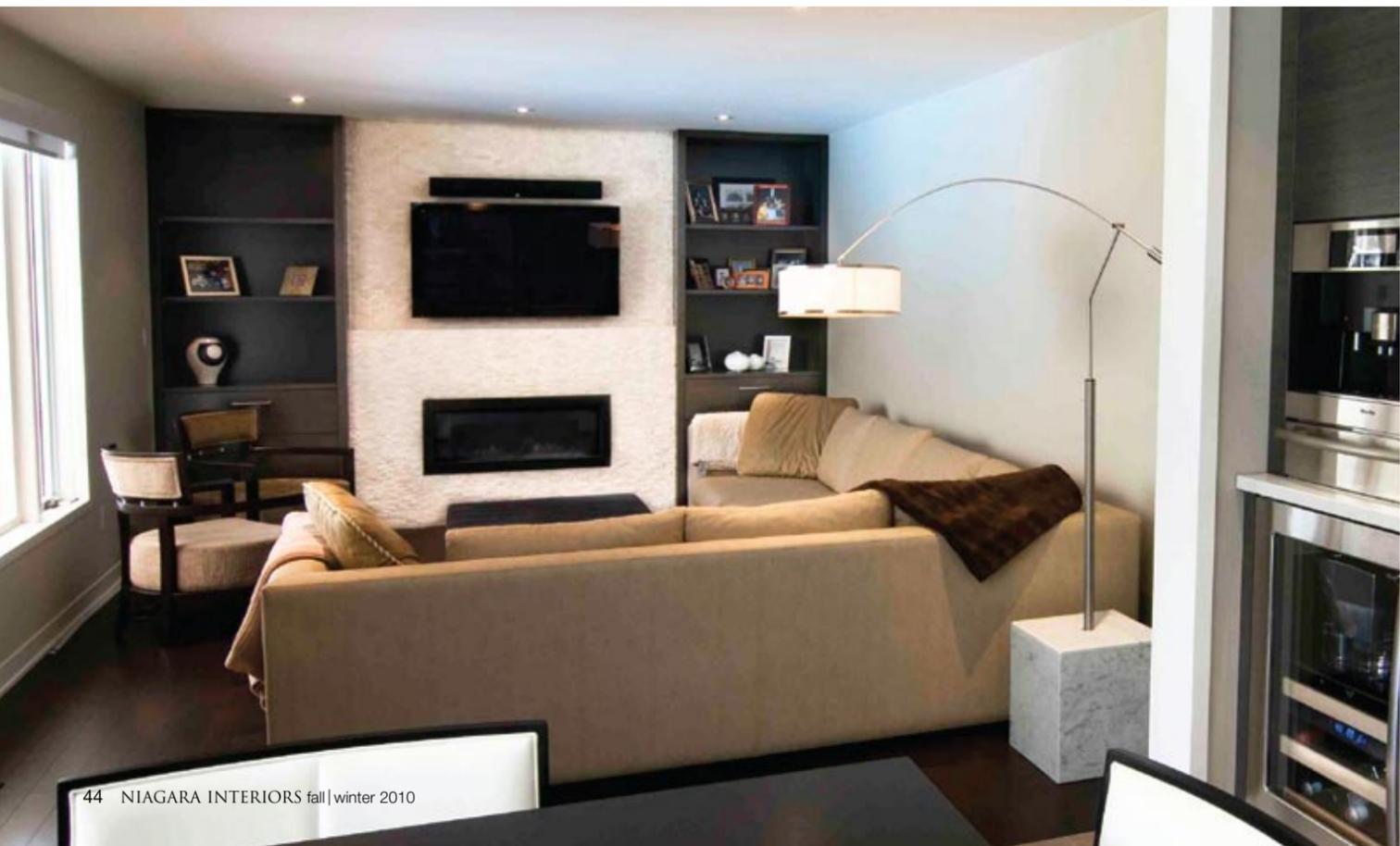


HEART OF THE HOUSE

Choosing to eliminate a secondary door from the dining room gave the kitchen the maximum amount of cabinetry, counter and appliance space. "One of the homeowners' main goals of the project was ensuring there was a place for everything and everything had a place," Burgess says, working closely with Andrea Kurilla from Artcraft Kitchens to guarantee that both the layout and millwork finishes suited the client's needs. When clutter can be managed and accounted for, it makes for calmer surroundings. Why not achieve this practicality in the most pleasing, beautiful way?

FUNCTIONAL FAMILY

Removing a visually obstructive archway allows for a better flow of people and communication between the kitchen/family room areas. Likewise, keeping the fireplace above floor level is great for providing a clear sight line from any angle. A Union Lighting floor lamp, with a modified custom white carrera marble base and softer fabric linen shade by the designer, enlightens the room. **Design tip:** Always go for integrated shelving and cabinetry to give clean lines and a feeling of more space, rather than free-standing furniture pieces. It also curbs future mismatched furniture choices!



Undoubtedly, embarking on the inherent chaos of a renovation can be a stressful time for many homeowners. There are decision deadlines to meet, and the panic of late-night phone calls and emails when you suddenly realize you possibly just made a very wrong decision. But also choosing to live surrounded by the demolition of your former home presents myriad logistical considerations and challenges for any on-the-go household.

The solution involved some inspired arrangements during the six-month construction phase. "You've really got to keep the lines of communication open and maintain harmony," Alfieri believes, and that's when enlisting and relying on a team of experts benefits the homeowner. Having dedicated people on hand, helping navigate first steps, through the lengthy journey to completion, is essential to the success of a project.

With the whirlwind of renovation bedlam now a memory, incredible results prove it was worth the brief disruption. What has emerged from a rather tired looking, early '80s house is an achievement designer Burgess calls, "an overall feel that is modern and sophisticated, yet family friendly and functional." A fresh palette of earthy woods, tactile ceramic alongside glass accents, and chic metals mixed with smooth surfaces have also ushered in an increased efficiency and organization for the active family—just one of the many benefits in a well-designed and implemented space.

After all, once the dust has been vacuumed up, the numerous choices have been duly appreciated, and you sit down to enjoy a family meal around the table, renovating a house is really about increasing its liveability. So, never let real life compromise your dreams . . . in the end, you might find yourself living where the two meet. **NMI**

LOCAL RENOVATION RESOURCES

- Windrush Hill Construction:** Tony Alfieri, windrushhill.ca
- B.E. Burgess & Associates:** Brian Burgess - with design team of Nicole Romanelli and Tracy Clipsham, beburgessindesign.com
- Norwood Stairs & Railings Inc.:** norwoodstairs.com
- Eurolite:** eurolite.com
- Byrcon Wood Products:** wood-doors.com
- Precision Metals:** St. Catharines, (905) 687-3535
- Union Lighting:** unionlightingandfurnishings.com
- Artcraft Kitchens:** artcraftkitchens.com
- Artwood Flooring:** artwoodflooring.com

SLIDING LIGHT

Matching floor-to-ceiling sliding doors stylishly enclose the home office and dining room when duty calls. Designed by Burgess & Associates as a functional focal point to the foyer, the custom-made doors are an impressive testament to local Niagara craftsmanship. Still marveling at the "exceptional job" done by Byrcon Wood Products on this important feature, Burgess says Byrcon fabricated the frames and assembled the doors to very challenging specifications. The design team chose to echo a similar style of cabinet hardware found elsewhere in the house, this time with oversized handles made by Precision Metals. It also incorporated frosted specialty glass, providing necessary privacy while still allowing additional diffused natural light into the space.



LOGISTICAL LIVING

In the role of project manager, Tony Alfieri had to get creative between the months of July and November to minimize the site's disturbance to the family's everyday activities. Accommodating their request with the existing layout, he constructed plastic walls starting at the front foyer to totally cocoon the main staircase, upper floor bedrooms, and basement. This shrouded the family away from dust and debris as the entire main floor was completely gutted and re-imagined, opting for a refined, open feeling to the space. "It was like having their own self-contained apartment within the house," he recalls, "and that's a big part of a renovation—keeping the homeowner happy during the process."

