

LIGHTED LIVING: Inviting generous sunshine into the bright main living space, a stretch of sliding patio doors now graciously opens onto the backyard for effortless entertaining. The mantel ledge on the floor-to-ceiling gas fireplace is done in a Brookside walnut burl veneer with a clear matte finish, picking up on the richer tone used in the adjoining kitchen and echoing its warm texture and colour.





Urban Renewal

A creative reno revitalizes the aging inside a home whose owners loved its 'outer wrapper' and everything else about it

WRITTEN BY Christine Darragh | PHOTOGRAPHY BY Mike DeGasperi



It's a common urban predicament. You love your house's "outer wrapper." The location is convenient, the neighbours are pleasant, and you can't part with all the great family memories it surrounds. Still, you desperately need to make some essential adjustments. At issue: the house's "inner workings" no longer fit the bill.

In this case the homeowners had their St. Catharines house built to their specifications in one of the city's familiar subdivisions of the '90s. Since then their lifestyle, budget, and expectations had changed significantly. Their house, however, had not. Decisions made then would not be the same ones they'd make today.

In particular, this family of five often found their main floor kitchen and family area didn't really accommodate their everyday needs. The floor plan was inflexible and lacked good sense; drawer and shelving space was inadequate; the building grade materials used were now showing definite signs of wear and tear. And as was fairly typical in construction of this period, big, chunky oak cabinetry was in vogue, bulky appliances were visually prominent and the extra conveniences of family organization were generally a distant afterthought for the original builders. Esthetically speaking, the overall style also seemed rather stale compared to a visually compelling, contemporary design seen in many newer homes.

And another consideration loomed large. The homeowners loved to regularly entertain, but an impractical layout wasn't working for their family occasions of 30 or more dinner guests. In fact, between the dysfunctional, dated kitchen arrangement and the hindrance of



GET THE SUPPORTING DETAILS: (OPPOSITE PAGE) A dated looking structural column between the kitchen and family room was in serious need of a revamp, with the original support being a traditional Roman style that no longer suited the new renovation's sleek makeover. After removing the façade covering, a custom-made column was fabricated in two halves, finished and polished by hand at Artcraft Kitchens with the same high gloss white used on the kitchen cabinetry, and seamlessly installed around the four-inch by four-inch steel post on site. Now even Julius Caesar would approve.

SPARKLING SERENITY: (THIS PAGE) The homeowners chose family-friendly flourishes for the kitchen, designed and supplied by Artcraft. The simple, clean-lined cabinetry style is Dani, done in two complementary finishes: tall and upper doors are a high gloss Benjamin Moore paint (Snowfall White, OC-118) and the base cabinetry uses quarter sawn, horizontal grain walnut veneer with a custom stain. Contemporary handles by Hettich Capua are smooth, brushed stainless steel. The full-height backsplash/wall panel is Abet Laminati woodgrain laminate in a Microline finish, trimmed to the same depth in aluminum around the window openings for a distinctive integration.



space, it was all downright uninviting.

After living in the house for over ten years, the family had a pretty good idea of the changes they wanted to see, but they needed practical professional advice and implementation skills to make it a reality. “We wanted everything hidden. Exhaust vents, fridge, stove, cellphones, microwave, a place for mail, lockers for the kids . . . we wanted to create and maintain a clutter-free environment.”

Thankfully, experienced people knew just what to do with the problematic situation, channeling two major requirements for the renovation’s design direction: take an open, sleek, clean-lined approach, and create places to keep everything in an efficient state of order.

Windrush Hill set up a temporary kitchen in the garage while heavy demolition and remodelling work were being done inside the house. A kitchen isn’t something you can just live without for months at a time, Windrush Hill owner Tony Alfieri says, especially with a five-person household. Every accommodation was made to keep the family unit running along smoothly with little disturbance during the four months of construction.

Utilizing the kitchen design skills of Tom Ellis at Artcraft Kitchens in Niagara Falls, a fresh layout was achieved. Space was fully maximized by the addition of a multi-functional work/eat-in centre island, with a built-in induction cooktop and plenty of secret spots for cooking pots and pans beneath. Doing this modification allows for a further eight linear feet of uninterrupted upper storage between the two kitchen windows.

Concealment is key for active family living, Ellis explains. A new mudroom effectively keeps coats, backpacks, and other items completely separate from the busy kitchen area, and adding an adjacent side pantry provides necessary storage. Roll-up aluminum tambour drawers keep everything—small appliances, electronics, charging stations, papers and mail, the necessities of everyday life—completely tucked away from being a distracting eyesore.

The project was completed in the summer of 2010, but the homeowners are still singing the praises of both the process and outcome. For anyone considering this type of endeavour, they strongly urge the use of experts in the field—people who are of the same design mindset and can make it all come together with minimal stress and interruption. NMI

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