

A small High Park renovation gets big ideas



Ask Jennifer Devereaux about her favourite feature of her renovated home and she's quick to respond: "My closets. I love my closets."

When you're starved for storage space, it really is the little things that count.

That's why she and her husband Dave agreed on a modest renovation of their 1,500-square-foot, detached home on a quiet street in Toronto's High Park neighbourhood. But their plan to dig out a short basement to gain more living and storage space ultimately morphed into a year-long, \$500,000-plus transformation of their entire house.



Today, the home boasts 2,600 sq. ft. of livable space, including a kitchen and dining area that serve as the heart of the home, and a hydronically-heated basement with a bedroom, bathroom, family room and laundry room. A brand new master bedroom with ensuite and walk-in closet on the second floor offer a touch of luxury. Despite the beauty of the finishes that honour the heritage of the home, she truly can't get over the storage capacity.

“There's a place for everything we own. And we can shop at Costco now,” she said.

The expanded project began when development manager Brendan Charters of Eurodale Design + Build made his first visit to quote on the underpinning project. “What else bugs you about the house?” he asked the couple.



Devereaux says a torrent of complaints fell out of her.

“The kitchen is totally isolated so we can’t have friends over and all be in the same room. The whole house is really cold. There’s no sleeping space for when our parents visit. And I would really like it if I could have a Christmas tree in the same room where we open presents.”



Despite an “abnormal” layout, Charters confirmed that they could have everything they wanted within the zoning permits they’d already obtained. Since they’d been planning to creep into the backyard with a basement addition, Charters suggested adding to the main and second floors, as well.

“We had been planning this renovation for so long, almost nine years. We decided, if we’re going to do it, we might as rip the entire band-aid off at once,” said Devereaux, vice-president of underwriting at Markel, a commercial insurance company.

At 90 years old, the house was ready for a facelift. Charters says that, although the masonry was solid, porous bricks, shrunken wood joists and no insulation were some of the culprits for the cold that seeped through.



“With a combination boiler, we installed in-floor hydronic heating in the basement, at the front entry and under bathroom tiles. This makes for a warm floor under the foot and a dry and comfortable basement,” said Charters.



As a professional who works in the energy industry, Dave Devereaux took a special interest in this aspect of the renovation. Jennifer says he takes pride and comfort in the state-of-the-art mechanical closet featuring a back-up generator. “He goes down and just looks at it,” she said. This was a treat for Charters and his team.

“Most people get excited about the appliances in their kitchen or quartz countertops. But for a homeowner to be as excited about the stuff that’s hidden behind the walls and under the floors is testament to their social conscience to reduce their carbon footprint, and make sure their home

has long-term viability, no matter the cost of energy,” said Charters.

The finishes were also important. Jennifer says their 11-year-old daughter Claire was initially nervous about the renovation. “She was worried it was going to be modern and wouldn’t feel like home,” said Devereaux.



The whole family worked with Eurodale to retain the look of the original house. Walls came down to turn a tight galley kitchen into an open space, but they took measures to blend the old with the new. Built-in shelves were constructed around a leaded stained-glass window to envelope a family mission-style dining hutch. Glebe-style trim was installed to match the rest of the house. And an antique Canada Post mail slot hangs proudly in the kitchen.



New elements that the family adore include a metallic brick backsplash that reminds them of Jennifer's mother's native Iceland. A quartz island provides plenty of space for family-cook Dave to spread out, and glass doors in the dining area open onto a sheltered patio for summer dining and entertaining.

"We live in the kitchen/dining room. Homework, singing lessons at the piano, cooking, baking, TV sports — a lot of sports are watched in here," said Devereaux.

The pendant lights over the dining room and island were chosen to

help infuse a pub-style atmosphere and the striking wall colour is Maple Leafs blue. “When we have people over, we put as much food on the island as we can, and everyone hangs out and is comfortable.”

THE NUMBERS

\$399,000: Cost of house in 2001

October 2017: Start of construction

October 2018: End of construction process

365: Number of visits the family made to the construction site

3: Number of blocks their rented apartment was from their house



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