

# THE STAR

## Before and after: Three bathroom renovations create home refuges



If the kitchen is the heart of a home, the bathroom has become a refuge as we continue to stay at home and stay safe

Here are three inspiring master bathroom renovations that were dreamed up and completed before the pandemic.



**Back to the future:** Andrea McQueen was called in to rescue a Burlington, Ont. couple's master bathroom from a hopeless time warp.

"That bathroom would have been pretty luxe in the '80s," said the owner of [Andrea McQueen Design](#), of the dusty-rose-carpeted corner tub, melamine counters, massive wall mirror, shiny black wallpaper and track lighting.

"The couple wanted a functional bathroom that was really beautiful. However, we were conscious about where we invested and where we saved to achieve the look they were after," said McQueen.

First step: reconfiguring the layout to create a huge, glass-enclosed double shower and provide room for a free-standing tub sourced from Costco.

McQueen cleansed the room of its frenzied patterns and colours, updating it with a soothing white palette. The Carrera marble inside the shower plays off the dove-grey vanity. White porcelain floor tile was a cost-effective choice, and the herringbone pattern elevates the look. Pot lights, sconces and a pretty chandelier cast all kinds of illumination in the room.

"We saved the splurge for plumbing fixtures, cabinetry, lighting, mirrors



and a heated floor,” said McQueen.

The big spend was on the double vanity with a mullion detail and big drawers from [Top Notch Cabinets](#) in Oakville. “Drawers are super functional storage as opposed to doors,” added McQueen. “Having a place for everything in the bathroom and no clutter really does make your life better,” said McQueen.

**A refuge for health-care workers:** In pre-pandemic times, interior designer Beth Lowenfeld, principal of [Four Blocks South](#), created a master bathroom oasis for a Forest Hill couple who are both doctors.



“Because they both lead hectic lives and have high-stress jobs and two small kids, the couple wanted to create an area where they could retreat,” said Lowenfeld.

The homeowners were looking for watery hues and sandy tones that remind the wife of her native Newfoundland. “It was exciting to work with more colour than the average Toronto homeowner would choose.”

Enter a deep turquoise shower. “We showed them a much more neutral option and there was no contest. They both immediately gravitated to the turquoise,” said Lowenfeld.

The standard ceramic tiles are set off up by smaller enameled glass tiles from Montreal-based [Céragrès](#) with a cascading effect meant to mimic the rippling of water.

The couple loved the streamlined look of the Vanico walnut vanity they



happened upon in Roman Bath Centre. “It has lots of storage and sneaky details in the drawers that accommodate everything you can imagine.

“The couple had been living in a small condo for a long time with little kids. And the wife had reached her breaking point with chaos, so being strategic and having a place for everything was huge for her.”

A corner soaker tub is strategically situated under a skylight. “During the day, the way the light reflects on the tiles and reflective surfaces is beautiful.”

Final touches in the the seven-by-11-foot room included a heated towel rack and heated floor.

“Of all the spaces we worked on in the house, this room was one of the most rewarding. The wife said she had a bath the first night they moved in and it was just like heaven,” said Lowenfeld.



**A retreat in the trees:** Before Laura Stein and her husband could create a new master bedroom and ensuite, they had to serve an eviction notice to a

brood of raccoons.

“Yep, there was a full family of raccoons in what would become our bedroom. They even made themselves raccoon-sized doors by cutting through the siding on the outside of the house and pulling it back to gain entry,” said Stein, owner of [Laura Stein Interiors](#).

After a humane goodbye to the former tenants, Stein got to work designing a challenging ensuite bathroom in their 100-year-old Roncesvalles home.

A window on one side of the room, a door on the other and two sloped ceilings in between meant Stein had to experiment with different layouts and ultimately installed a floating wall smack in the middle of the room.

“This became the plumbing wall. On one side is the shower and the other side holds the vanity and sink. And what’s nice about this design is that it separates the shower and sink area so we can both be in there at once and not be in each other’s way.”

Beneath one angled wall is a closet for her husband and beneath the other is a built-in cabinet to store linens and towels.

The floating wall has porcelain tile made to look like marble on the vanity side, and it wraps around to play off the river rock stones on the floor of the shower on the opposite side.

Stein custom-designed the walnut vanity, including the mirror featuring two face-flattering strip lights on either side and cabinetry above it. “It gives us a high-end contemporary feel. And since it’s floating, it lets more light move through the room,” she said.

“I wanted the bathroom to feel like an upscale treehouse. We have a lovely tree on our front lawn. We have a top-down/bottom-up blind that is usually open at the top, so it feels like we’re up in the trees.”



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