



With a baby on the way, these homeowners wanted family-friendly features

BY *Connie Adair*. PHOTOS BY *Aaron Mason*

# Great Expectations

**A** new baby on the way spurred the renovation of this Toronto Victorian home to create a family-friendly space that melds the best of old and new.

Rather than leave the downtown neighbourhood they love in search of a larger home, the owners decided to renovate their approximately 1,300-square-foot home. They gained valuable space by ensuring every inch is put to good use and that no space is wasted. They used their existing square footage to its best advantage. “They customized the home to their wants,” says contractor Amedeo Barbini.

The homeowner is a designer who works for a commercial design company, a bonus

because “the more clients understand about the process and construction, the more their expectations are realistic,” he says. The homeowner created the drawings for the project, and chose colours and products she wanted.

The all-important kitchen and bathrooms were renovated and more usable family space was ‘recaptured’ by including the square footage offered in an enclosed back porch.

A wall between the porch and kitchen was removed and the large space converted into a spacious kitchen/family room, ideal for everyday use as well as entertaining.

“The kitchen is a big element of the renovation,” Barbini says. The owner’s

design was custom built, with cabinets that are a mix of golden and dark stained oak to create interest.

Low-maintenance Caesarstone was chosen for the counter tops and a waterfall-style counter was used on the large rectangular island/breakfast bar.

The symmetrical kitchen design is centred around the stove and hood, which are flanked by golden wood cabinetry on the top and dark lower drawers. These in turn have floor-to-ceiling dark wood cabinets on either side, one containing a refrigerator. The use of pulls was kept to a minimum to keep the space looking clean.

A custom-made matching dark wood







## The symmetrical kitchen design is centred around the stove and hood

display cabinet stands beside an exposed brick wall, which adds visual warmth to the space.

The back wall of the house was replaced with big quad doors manufactured by Inline Fibreglass in Toronto. The company makes high-performance, energy-efficient windows and doors. Fibreglass is a natural insulator. The quad doors serve to bring light and the outside in, and allow for a clear view of the private urban backyard. When the doors are open and folded back on themselves, the backyard is welcomed as additional living space.

The enclosed back porch floor was a step down from the rest of the main floor. During the renovation it was raised so the main floor living space is all on one level. This makes it more user friendly to toddlers, older people visiting the home and visitors in

general, who no longer have to navigate an unexpected step.

The front of the house sports a new front door, which opens on to a vestibule with a closet that was rebuilt and given a new door.

Services, such as the electrical, were brought up to current standards, making the space safe. All of the new and existing lighting is now LED, Barbini says.

Floors are prefinished premium hardwood. Walls, trim and baseboards are painted white to create a light, airy interior.

The living/dining room has pot lights to keep the space clean and bright. Natural light cascades from a second-floor skylight down the stairs.

Instead of having the bottom step extend to the floor, white trim continues ➔

### ABOVE

Black cabinetry punctuates the look of the warm wood to provide stark contrast.

### TOP RIGHT

An exposed brick wall provides warmth to the kitchen and complements the hardwood flooring.

### BELOW RIGHT

An antler chandelier provides character while potlights in the ceiling keep the space bright.





Renovation



**FAR LEFT**

Only a small light fixture was required for the staircase since a skylight provides natural light during the daytime.

**RIGHT**

The semi-detached home is only 1,300 square feet so they made every inch count.

**BELOW LEFT**

The master bedroom has floor-to-ceiling closets to maximize every inch of space.

**BELOW RIGHT**

The black framed windows and doors complement the black cabinetry of the kitchen.

along the baseboard and under the step. This little detail makes the staircase appear as if it is floating.

On the second floor, contemporary railings mix wood and glass, and visually expand the hall. The second floor was also restructured. Bedrooms and the hallway have new floors and are freshly painted.

This three-bedroom home includes a nursery and bedroom that's being used as a dressing room/office.

The master bedroom has a floor-to-ceiling closet that uses every inch of wall space. A closet was built by a cabinetmaker to fit the irregular wall space.

Bathrooms were also painted and new tiles installed. The 250-square-foot basement was reworked to provide storage space and a laundry room.

Throughout, contemporary details create a desirable fresh sense of décor in this historic home and the clean design is suitable for any style of furniture.

The owners plan to enjoy the home, but created a renovation design that will appeal to future buyers, Barbini says. "That provides the owners with an exit strategy if they look for a bigger home in the future." **HC**



**Floor Fix**

The main level's 'wonky floors' were restructured, strengthened and levelled. When renovating an old home, expect to have to do this Barbini says. "Features like this sink over the years and it can be a major expense."

Some people choose not to do this, even though the project is almost a given in older homes. Barbini says another consideration when renovating an older home is to expect the unexpected and prepare your budget in case you encounter unforeseen expenses.

