



# SECOND ROUND



# TIME

BUILDING WITH GREEN MATERIALS WAS TOP PRIORITY FOR THESE HOMEOWNERS

BY Connie Adair PHOTOS BY Craig A. Williams

The homeowner knew she had picked the right company to complete a green renovation on her home, but when the construction crew arrived via public transit or on bicycles, and ate lunches packed in reusable containers, she was pleasantly surprised at how committed they really were to protecting the environment.

The difference between this whole-house renovation and her first project 20 years ago was night and day. Two decades ago, she didn't think about sustainable building. However she was concerned as she watched 15 trucks of demolition waste being taken to the landfill. That picture stayed with her.

Fast forward to 2012. She and her husband weren't planning to move but couldn't pass up the "century home on a ravine lot in a great neighbourhood" in Toronto, she says. She didn't know much about green building, but was determined to do it right the second time around.

A friend told her about Toronto-based Greening Homes Ltd. And the rest, as they say, is history.

The homeowners met with company president Chris Phillips, who has a masters degree in building science from Ryerson University and is a graduate of the sustainable design and build program at Fleming College. He is also a LEED accredited professional.

*Being green didn't mean having to sacrifice looks*

The new company had never tackled a project of this scale. "It was their first major whole house renovation," the homeowner says. "We had lots of confidence in the crew and I was involved in every aspect of the decision making. They were skilled, committed and conscientious. It was a thoughtful process."

The house was gutted and most of the demolition materials (wood, concrete and drywall) were recycled. The house was completely reframed and an addition was built. Fifty windows were replaced with 





**LEFT**

The open-concept style of the living area and kitchen is divided by the island and defined by furniture placement.

**LOWER**

Custom moulding on the ceiling adds a traditional look to the living room.

**LEFT**

Leaded inserts on the kitchen cabinets add old-world style.

**BELOW**

The kitchen was moved to the back of the house where more space was available.



energy-efficient versions in the same style and size as the originals.

All new copper plumbing and a new HVAC system were installed. Spray foam insulation was added to create an air-tight envelope and an R-30 insulation rating.

In a recent comparison of homes and energy costs in Toronto neighbourhoods, Enbridge said this home uses one-third less gas even though it is 40 per cent larger than the average home in the same area and has lots of gas appliances (two fireplaces, two stoves, two water heaters, a barbecue and two dryers), the homeowner says.

Another goal was to create a healthy living environment for her family. “We wanted to minimize toxic elements,” she says. Carefully selected products include: recycled drywall, volatile organic compounds-free (VOC-free) paints and water-based stains. The plywood is urea formaldehyde free and framing lumber was FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified, as were trim and interior doors. Soy-based stripper was used on the staircase, the only original feature that was retained.

Surprisingly, she found costs for most of the environmentally friendly/green products they

used were comparable to traditional materials.

Being green didn’t mean having to sacrifice looks. “In keeping with the aesthetic of the neighbourhood, the home is traditional yet open and flows in a modern way, the way modern spaces should,” the homeowner says. “The kitchen was moved from the front of the house to the back so it flows with the deck. We do a lot of casual entertaining.”

She designed the kitchen, which she calls her playground. “I knew how much space I needed and where everything needed to be put in order to entertain efficiently. I love to cook for a crowd. The 11-foot island is a focal point.”

Three sinks allow for different workstations so guests can be involved. The homeowner designed three leaded glass windows above the sink to bring light in and mask the view of a brick wall of the house next door. The pantry area is open and guests can move easily from the kitchen to the formal dining room/library.

On the second floor, there were three small bedrooms and a library. The space was redesigned to incorporate a large master suite/sitting room and en suite bathroom →

## Green Renovation

### LEFT

The dining room also serves as a library.

### RIGHT

Three bedrooms and two bathrooms were accommodated on the third floor.

### RIGHT MIDDLE

An ensuite bathroom is open to the bedroom area.

### RIGHT BELOW

Drawers under the bed are ideal to store extra bedding.

### BELOW

The den provides more bookshelves for the homeowners' extensive collection.



at the back of the house.

A guest bedroom and en suite are at the front of the second floor. An open library in the middle separates the two rooms. Keeping the library open served to eliminate long hallways that would have wasted space.

The third floor was reconfigured into three bedrooms and two bathrooms. By enlarging the dormers, it was possible to add walkouts from two bedrooms to a balcony.

The walkout basement was dug out and redone, making it energy efficient and eliminating the damp and mould issues. In-floor heating was added. "I highly recommend heated floors," she says. "We use the basement all the time."

As with any renovation, there were surprises. Gutting the home revealed crumbling

structural supports, which were rebuilt.

Plans for the 5,000-square-foot home took three months and construction/renovations took another 18 months.

The homeowner says she is happy with the design and enjoyed the project. "The crew were really passionate about the work," she says.

What would she like other homeowners to take from her project? "Homeowners should know there are options out there. Talk to your contractor and see if they see the value in sustainability and what materials they can source. You will quickly see if they understand and are committed to the newest and best building practices. Be willing to be part of the team and be open to good ideas. Collaboration yields good results," she says. **HC**





### Feeding the Mind

The dining room doubles as a library and study. "My husband is an avid book collector and reader. I'm always trying to find places to house bookcases," says the homeowner. So creating a dining room/library made perfect sense. "The dining room isn't generally used Monday to Friday, so it's used as a library and a place where the kids can study. On weekends, the books make for a warm backdrop for entertaining in winter. During the rest of the year, entertaining is done on the deck or in the breakfast area."

