



# Family home gets a makeover

WITH CHILDREN NEARLY GROWN, BRIAN VICKERS WANTED HIS 1980s HOUSE UPDATED TO REFLECT THEIR CHANGING LIFESTYLES

By Leah Scully

Photography • Mathew McCarthy

**FROM THE OUTSIDE**, the Upper Beechwood home sits comfortably alongside its neighbours on a quiet cul-de-sac with only a few subtle indications of the dramatic renovation recently completed inside. Whether it's the pair of antique dog statues flanking the front door, the dark, clean-lined outdoor furniture or the simple landscaping, this home's curb appeal suggests that a wonderful house lies just beyond the front door.

It was after reading about Kitchener's Suzanne Tait Design that Brian Vickers contacted Tait about bringing a contemporary style to his 20-year-old, centre-hall home. His three children were growing up (two are still at home, one is in residence at university) and he and Tait began to analyse what space could be put to better use.

Prior to its renovation, Vickers' house had a large living room, adjacent dining room, kitchen, separate family room and main-floor den. Upstairs were three bedrooms, a main bathroom and a large master bedroom with en suite bath. Each room was separate, unlike today's homes whose open-concept layouts accommodate a more casual lifestyle.

That was exactly the facelift this house needed.



Trudy Briski and Brian Vickers stand in front of their Hemingway Place home.

Although the façade of the home remained untouched, new windows were installed and almost every room underwent a complete redesign to suit Vickers' needs as a pet owner and congenial host.

Structurally, an entire bedroom directly above the front door was removed to open up the ground floor hall, turning a dark foyer into a stunning, two-storey entrance area flooded with natural light. New stair posts and handrails give the impression of a narrow walkway around the open space on the second floor.

In keeping with Vickers' desire for the house to maintain a modern, yet classic



feel, Tait added contemporary panelling to the front hall and staircase, and new clean-lined, yet more substantial mouldings to all of the door and window frames. The dramatic architectural presence helps create the impression of higher ceilings.

The panelling continues into the new dining room, which was previously the rarely used living room. Vickers enjoys hosting dinner parties and poker nights, and the new dining room had to ▶



Above: A seldom-used living room became a spacious dining room for an owner who enjoys hosting dinner and poker parties. Moulding gives the walls new importance and black lamp shades contrast with the pale walls. Oak hardwood flooring was restrained a chocolate-cherry colour. Beyond, the former dining room is now a billiards room.

Right: With its dark woods and fishing memorabilia, the den adjacent to the entrance hall is distinctly masculine in style.





Above: Kitchener designer Suzanne Tait worked with the owner for a year, modernizing the house. Black granite and stainless steel complement new cabinetry.

Right: A bedroom above the front door was removed, brightening the entrance hall.

► accommodate a 90-inch table for 12.

Minimal accessories encourage more notice of architectural details, while the dramatic black shades on lights over the dinner table and sideboard ground the room and give it a stately appearance when viewed from the foyer.

What was previously the dining room is now the epitome of a traditional billiards room. New cherry crown moulding and wainscoting, stained to a rich chocolate colour, masculine artwork and classic lighting create the perfect setting for a game.

The kitchen, whose layout remained relatively unchanged, was modernized with new cabinetry, lighting and appliances. Custom millwork is finished in dark cherry, and Tait took cabinet moulding right up the ceiling. Black granite countertops and a large centre island/worksurface with wood detail help ground the room. Stainless steel appliances, a beige tumbled stone backsplash and white window mouldings balance the dark finishes to create an elegant, yet contemporary kitchen.

The family room remains dedicated to movies and entertaining, and was



redesigned with new, custom-made plush seating and leather recliners placed for maximum enjoyment of the big-screen television, surround sound and the warmth of the wood-burning fireplace. Tait suggested a new stone façade for the fireplace, but Vickers wanted to keep the original brick. They agreed on a new mantel built from a salvaged wood post.

Upstairs, the walls were painted, the banister refinished and new lighting and moulding installed everywhere.

In the master bedroom, classic white wood panelling contrasts with dark, glossy wood bedroom furniture and the custom-



Above: The designer jokes that the colour scheme of white, sage and taupe in the master bedroom was chosen because it blends with the hair of the owner's pets. The headboard is dark brown corduroy.

Left: In the main bathroom, an unusual semi-circular vanity is flanked by tall, matching cabinets.



made, chocolate brown corduroy headboard. Simple window treatments showcase the new mouldings.

The master en suite was also redesigned, with limestone tiles, a marble countertop (36 inches high to accommodate Vickers' six-foot height) and custom cabinetry. The main bathroom was renovated, starting with an unusual semi-circular sink and vanity which Vickers found. Tait was initially unsure, but once she installed tall cabinets on each side, she decided it works.

To update the flooring while keeping to her budget, Tait had the existing oak hardwood sanded and restained a dramatic dark

chocolate-cherry. New carpet was purchased for the family room and bedrooms, and the stairs were refinished with mahogany treads, white risers and a rich caramel runner. Kitchen cabinetry and bathroom millwork was done by Olympia Cabinetry. S.L. Marcella Carpets provided the new and refinished flooring and carpets.

The colour scheme was relatively easy. Tait chose white, sage and taupe for the walls, creating drama and interest with black accessories and dark wood finishes.

She jokes that it was really determined by Vickers' dogs, Corey and Duke, and Chloe, the cat. With the animals having free rein in the house, Vickers wanted colours and fabrics to disguise the hair shed especially by Corey, a golden retriever who has taken a liking to his owner's new duvet cover.

The process from concept to completion took just under one year, and the results, unveiled at Vickers' 50th birthday party, proved that change is good.

And there was more to come. Vickers' partner, Trudy Briski, and her daughter recently moved in to join the family in their newly contemporary home. ©