

Homes

EMPTY NESTERS RENOVATE THEIR COOP

‘It had a lot going for it – other than the interior’

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MAKEOVER MONTH. This is the first in a four-part series featuring home renovations.

For a couple that loved their home’s location but not its dated interior, the decision to renovate was an easy one.

“The homeowners are an empty nester family that have their own building business and saw the location as a huge asset, as it is within walking distance to the quality shops of Unionville,” says Jane Lockhart, the principal of Jane Lockhart Design in Mississauga.

“It even has a nice lot and inground pool, so it had a lot going for it — other than the interior,” says Lockhart, one of Canada’s most popular design and colour experts. The house hadn’t been renovated since it was built in the late 1990s and had a “chopped up” layout with a peninsula kitchen, circular staircase and small, closed rooms.

The renovation included all floors, although the focus was on the main and second floors, as well as the front porch and entrance, which featured overgrown greenery, outdated colours and disintegrating wood posts.

In the interior, a lot of structural work took place to remove walls. Beams were installed to create an open main floor and were pushed up into the ceiling so there were no headers. That created a seamless transition from the dining and living room to the lounge and kitchen, which was expanded to encompass



Jane Lockhart of Jane Lockhart Design. **ALEX LUKEY**

the entire back corner of the house.

“By removing the original small peninsula kitchen and instead adding a U-shaped perimeter with a large island, the flow of the kitchen changed significantly, allowing more than one person to operate comfortably within it,” Lockhart says. “White cabinetry with touches of walnut updated the overall look and helped to break up the white expanse.”

Even though the ceiling is still eight feet high, exposing the kitchen to the main floor helps to alleviate the sense of a lower ceiling, as light now streams in through windows on all walls, she adds. “The countertop is white quartz as well, which minimizes contrast in the space, allowing

the eye to easily flow around the space.”

All bathrooms were also renovated as part of the eight-month project. “The homeowners rearranged the flow of the principal ensuite by making the closet adjacent and accessible through the bathroom rather than the bedroom. This allowed for more wall space in the bedroom, better suiting their daily habits,” Lockhart says.

Larger windows were added wherever possible and light wood flooring was installed almost everywhere to unify and enlarge the overall feel. Awkward steps at the foyer entry were removed and the curved staircase was replaced with a corner version to save space and make hallways upstairs wider.

“The dining and living room that flows to the bar lounge, which faces the backyard pool, is a great element,” says Lockhart. “The lounge is, without doubt, the signature room of these homeowners, as they love to entertain and this break between the living room and kitchen creates such a nice way to use this space.

“It becomes an intimate seating area that isn’t focused on the TV and can be used before or after dinner. Also, the focus of the house was fully turned to face out towards the pool rather than inwards towards walls like so many homes do. This makes the exterior more integrated into the interior and enlarges the home visually, allowing the homeowners to take advantage of outside space all year round.”

One of the homeowners’ biggest challenges was making the house’s



A floor-to-ceiling wall unit and fireplace make the ceiling feel taller. **GILLIAN JACKSON**



Dark cabinetry in the principal ensuite provides classic contrast against the light tiles. Highlights include a dropdown makeup table. **GILLIAN JACKSON**

eight-foot ceilings feel taller. Lockhart addressed that by framing the windows with floor-to-ceiling drapery panels. In the living room, she designed a wall unit and linear fireplace feature from floor to ceiling, ensuring there was no break of the visual line.

“Unifying colours and materials helped to take away from what could have been a long, low space – especially when compared to today’s building style, in which nine feet is typically the lowest ceiling height,” Lockhart says. The homeowners added all the finishing touches, including wallpaper and accessories, and were “very happy” with their home’s transformation.

Lockhart’s advice to homeowners planning a major renovation? “Make sure to hire professionals when undertaking such a large project. Homeowners underestimate how much needs to get done, just in organization and paperwork, let alone all the other work in managing budgets, trades, materials and timelines.”



A corner staircase replaces the original circular one and saves space. **GILLIAN JACKSON**