



BACK TO THE FUTURE

A triplex was restored back to being a single family home

BY Connie Adair. PHOTOS BY Jordan Prussky/The Print Market

A self-confessed real estate website junkie, Chris Van Dyke's interest was piqued when he saw a house listed for \$100,000 less than he saw it listed for the year before. Coincidentally, he and his wife, Bridget Flynn, wanted to upsize from their semi-detached home so they decided to take a look at the detached brick house.

However it wasn't a single-family home, it was a triplex, with the owner living in one unit and the other units rented out. Luckily the owner realized the original price was too high — a stretch for a house that needed updating, Van Dyke says.

"We never planned on buying a triplex, but liked the large house," he says. It had curb appeal, but inside it was a mix of original features and some '80s and '90s renovations.

They moved into the second and third floor suites of the Edwardian home in Toronto's west end. Three years later, with a second child on the way, they either had to move or commit to a renovation.

"A renovation would be pretty big," he says. "We had four floors and 4,200 square feet to play with."

Their first thought was to remove all of the original detail and go with a completely modern design. However they reasoned that for future resale value, it might not be a good idea to do away with the home's character and charm.

Describing themselves as savvy design people, Van Dyke and Flynn "had a pretty good idea" how they wanted the house to look. They met with builder/project manager Amedeo Barbini, their book



RIGHT
Wallpaper adds interest with its sheen and pattern to the dining room.

FAR RIGHT ABOVE
The backsplash of the kitchen merges the white and blue cabinets together.

FAR RIGHT BELOW
Plenty of trim work and mouldings add character to the hallway.

of magazine clippings in hand. It included everything from the types of cupboards to details such as surface textures.

The triplex underwent various levels of renovation, from simply painting the third floor bedrooms to major structural work on the second floor, transforming it into a beautiful, comfortable single-family home. Nothing was left untouched, Barbini says.

New windows and flooring were installed, walls were restructured and rooms were enlarged. Custom millwork, extensive wainscotting and crown moulding were added throughout for a classic look.

The main floor was opened up by removing about two-thirds of a wall that ran the length of the house. Sightlines now span from the front door to the backyard.

Structural deficiencies at the back of the house were corrected with new structural members, Barbini says.

A new custom wood front door opens on to a spacious foyer, where the original staircase was retained but sanded and painted. Trim work was added to doors to lend a traditional flavour, but modern handles keep the look fresh.

The couple wanted a comfortable place to relax at the back of the house. The ➔



Dining Room Move
The formal dining room was moved to the front of the house because the couple wanted a separate room that could be closed off. Its original fireplace posed a challenge to convert to gas because the home is so close to its neighbour that venting between the houses was not practical.

An ethanol insert was purchased and was framed by a traditional mantle and a marble surround. “It burns liquid like a fancy candle,” Van Dyke says. “It burns clean. There’s no smoke.”

The entry from the foyer to the dining room was relocated and centred on the fireplace on the opposite wall. Van Dyke says closets were built into the wall on either side of the double glass dining room doors, providing storage space where there was none before. The closets are 20 inches deep but didn’t cut into the dining room space. “Amedeo figures things out to look cool,” Van Dyke says.





Working together, the owners and builder brought this home back to its former glory

floor plan now has an open-concept kitchen/eating/living room that stretches across the width of the residence.

Brick walls around the original kitchen nook were replaced with windows and a banquette was built in to create a sunny eating space. A powder room that opened on to the kitchen was converted into a walk-in pantry.

The chef's kitchen has custom white cupboards, a grey island and easy-to-maintain Caesarstone counters. High-end appliances include a Sub Zero fridge, a Wolfe gas cooktop and a Dacor warming oven.

A small powder room was squeezed into space between the stairs to the lower level and the kitchen. It was a challenge but a main-floor powder room is a must

for today's homes, Barbini says, adding functionality is the key to a successful renovation. "This home is creatively appointed. Part of claiming a single-family dwelling from a triplex was appointing spaces for today's requirements."

The living area has glass doors to the low-maintenance backyard to meld indoor and outdoor spaces. Another must for today's living.

On the second floor, the original main floor for the upper apartment was converted into a master retreat with a walk-in closet. The apartment's original kitchen was transformed into a massive en suite bathroom.

The bathroom was redesigned around a must-have soaker tub. The couple

TOP LEFT
Skylights provide natural lighting for the master en suite.

TOP RIGHT
A platform bed in the same tone as the flooring eliminates the need for a boxspring.

RIGHT
There's easy access to the front deck through the glass doors in the family room.

FAR RIGHT
The direction of the hardwood planks helps define the spaces.





FAR LEFT
The balcony off the family room is a quiet place to enjoy a drink.

FAR LEFT AND BELOW
The back deck is accessible from the kitchen and living room which makes for easy entertaining.



also wanted a separate shower and space to include “some marble as well as grey wood for the vanity,” Van Dyke says.

The skylights were retained and Barbini suggested converting the original kitchen's pantry space into a bathroom.

Two bedrooms on the second floor were converted into a spacious family room. A window beside the staircase to the third floor was enlarged to bring in additional light.

The lower level offers a recreation room, an office and a three-piece bathroom. New mechanicals include electrical, boiler and

HVAC systems.

The renovation, which created a beautiful and functional four-bedroom, four-bathroom residence, took about 11 months, not including painting, wallpapering and adding light fixtures.

Working together, the owners and builder brought this home back to its former glory, and raised the bar by ensuring it not only looks good but is functional and suits today's homeowner.

It's the little details that came together to create this amazing big picture. **HC**