



A Tale of Two Homes III

The Dreams Become Reality After Building Mode, the Ideal Abodes

Part Three of a Three-Part Series

The drywall dust has settled, and moving day has come and gone for both of our Tale of Two Home couples who both loved the lure of an older neighbourhood and looked for a way to satisfy their desire to live in one, while still enjoying the benefits of a custom-built home. For Nina and Greg Moe, the decision was made to gut and renovate an established home from the inside out, while Darla Tenold and Fahmy Behkit chose instead to build fresh right from the ground up.

In this, our final installation of A Tale of Two Homes, we'll get a glimpse of their finished homes; see some of the special custom features each have chosen to reflect their own personal styles; and see, from their point of view, what it is that makes a house a home.

- GAIL JANSEN



Nina and Greg Moe: Lots of Space and Special Touches

Photos: Jessica Storozuk

Taking on this substantial home renovation allowed the Moes the opportunity create an open floor plan that was accommodating to their lifestyle. Flower provided by Bill's House of Flowers.

Learning the Flow

With Greg and Nina Moe now firmly ensconced in their newly renovated home, all that's left are a few tweaks and the adjustment period of learning to fit the rhythm of their lifestyle into their new space. Something they're finding increasingly easier to do as time goes by.

"Sometimes, you think you want something one way," says Nina. "But until you get right into a place and live in it, you don't realize that it doesn't quite work the way you expected, so you have to change things up a little bit to fit with your flow."

The Big Features

What has worked for the Moes are the major structural changes they made to the house in order to give themselves the kind of open floor plan they desired. This ranged from the elimination of all the load-bearing walls on the main floor, which were replaced with steel I-Beams to give support to the upper floor, to the restructuring of the upstairs bedroom layout to give them the haven they were looking for.

"We wanted an open concept in the main living space," explains Nina. "We like to entertain a lot, so if we have a lot of people over,

or if there's a big game going on and I'm working in the kitchen, I can still be involved in the conversation, and that's a nice change were finding is working very well for us."

Another change that's working out well for them can be found on the home's second floor, where three of the four bedrooms were combined into one large master suite which holds a large walk-through closet, a spacious en suite bathroom. There is also a sitting area, complete with large screen TV and fireplace, where the couple can unwind before heading to bed. The old master bedroom remains untouched, save for a few updates, to act as the couple's guest room.

"It's very private and very quiet," says Nina of her new bedroom. "We just love it."

"While I realize it's not the layout most people would choose," she adds, "it's a very nice relaxing space, that's just perfect for us."

The Little Touches

Beyond the structural changes to the home, Nina and Greg worked together on a plan to include a host of added features and special touches that would work to make life just a little less complicated.



Left - Nina and Greg Moe stand in their kitchen (below) featuring a modern set-up and state of the art appliances from Kitchenz Etc.

This includes the fully-functional home gym that takes up the majority of their basement, to the large aesthetically-pleasing laundry room that takes the drudgery out of a regular household chore.

For Nina, though, some of the best features of her new home can be found right in the kitchen.

“I love to cook,” says Nina. “So I wanted some very nice appliances that were also energy-efficient. We put in a nice induction cook top, a steam oven which lets us cook in a really healthy way, a regular dishwasher for when we have guests and a little rollout dishwasher that’s just the perfect size for the day-to-day dishes that Greg and I use.”

Another great feature, says Nina, lies just under the granite countertop they installed on their large island and breakfast bar, in the form of a heated mat, that allows them to control the temperature of the countertop. “We really love it,” laughs Nina. “But I think our guests love it even more.”

Still, if one were to narrow down all of the homes amenities into one key focal point, both Nina and Greg agree it would have to be their custom-designed Tyndal Stone fireplace mantel made by local stone mason Brian Cey, who hand-finished the piece in such a way as to allow the fossils that lie within it to be seen.

“We actually had to reinforce the floor in the area because it’s so heavy that if it sat on a normal floor it would just break through,” says Nina. “But it’s so beautiful and there’s not another one like it anywhere.”

A Happy Ending

Even though it’s only been a couple of months since they’ve moved in, and they’re pretty sure the novelty will one day wear off, for now Nina and Greg say that pretty much every day at some point or other, whether they’re in the kitchen having their morning coffee, or just hanging out by the fireplace, they’ll often stop and just marvel at the amazing home they created together.

“We’re just so pleased with how it turned out. It’s a beautiful home, and we’re very pleased with the end result.”



The Moes replaced all the electrical wiring and plumbing in the home to accommodate the latest technologies.

Darla Tenold and Fahmy Bekhit: Room to Move with Elegant Additions



Photos: Jessica Storozuk

Learning the Flow

Moving in five weeks ahead of their proposed November move date, Darla Tenold and Fahmy Bekhit are thrilled with the spaciousness that greets them each time they walk into their new home.

“Whether we’re unloading the dishwasher or are both in the kitchen cooking supper together, we don’t run into each other anymore like we used to,” says Darla.

“It’s just so easy to live here with all the space, and the way things are set up in the kitchen, everything is just so easy to get to.”

This spaciousness was formulated in the design process they worked on with their builder.

“Right from the beginning, when we sat down with Cathy [Edwards] from Sanoma Homes, this is the kind of space we wanted,” explains Fahmy. “And now that we’re using it, we really appreciate both the space and the design.”

The Big Features

It’s a spaciousness that can be felt the minute you walk in the door, whether it’s the front grand entry way with its nine-foot ceilings, or the modern twist on the once popular mud room that greets them when they walk in the through the back.

“Not many of the new houses we looked at had a mud room,” says Darla. “Most opened up right into the kitchen or dining room, and we find we’re really enjoying being able to come into the house to a space where we can sit down and take our shoes off.”

Above - A coffered ceiling and wide curved archway elegantly connect the livingroom and kitchen.

Below - Darla and Fahmy are seen here making themselves at home.



Continuing on throughout the main floor, the spaciousness of the living room is only slightly separated from the kitchen by a curved archway, and from the dining room by a coffered ceiling. Upstairs that feeling continues with vaulted ceilings in the master bedroom, and a large master en suite complete with an enormous soaker tub that gives the room a spa-like feel, without ever overpowering it. A room, that for Darla was an extremely high priority, and required them to be extra efficient when planning the rest of their second floor. “We have three bedrooms upstairs, a guest bathroom and a laundry room,

”says Fahmy. “There is no unused space upstairs and yet at the same time we didn’t sacrifice any of the spacious feel.”

And while their basement has yet to be fully developed, it has already been fully roughed out for plumbing and electrical, as well as fully dry-walled and mudded, something both Darla and Fahmy say will not only cut down on the mess when they move forward to finish the basement, but also makes the chances that it will get done that much more of a likelihood.

The Little Touches

When deciding on the type of extras they would add to their home, Darla and Fahmy looked to items they felt would add to its overall elegance.

These range from the large 7’x 5’ quartz-covered island that covers one half of the galley kitchen, to the solid wood kitchen cabinets that line the other half, and the garden doors that lead from Darla’s office/bedroom out onto a second floor balcony.

Even in the case of the small fully-trimmed hole in the dining room wall that allows their cat access to the basement, and the built-in media closet located at the back of their living room that houses all of their electronic equipment, elegance remained at the forefront of their minds.

For the cat entry, it was a way of ensuring that the beautiful French door they had chosen for their basement could remain closed, and for the media closet, it was a way of keeping their TV area, neat and uncluttered.

A Happy Ending

With the building process now behind them, and a beautiful new house before them, the time has come for Darla and Fahmy to settle in and turn their elegant house into a home. A process Darla says is already well underway.

“I noticed it for the first time last night, after cleaning up after supper. It was all so easy, and I just thought to myself, ‘I’m really glad that we’re here.’

“Our whole family is coming at Christmas,” adds Darla. “And that’s something I think will help to make it feel even more like our home.”

“I wake up in the mornings and it still feels like I’m waking up in a hotel,” says Fahmy. “But once we start making dents in the wall, and scratch up the hardwood, then it will truly become my house.”



The galley kitchen has an elegant feel created by the ambiance set off by the lighting.

Advice from the Experts

To really get the home that you want, you have to know what you want, and know where you’re willing to compromise. So what should you hold on to and what should you abandon? Cathy Edwards of Sanoma Homes gives us a little insight. “When a homeowner gives us a wish list and they’re investing the money in building a new home,” says Edwards, “there are certain things that only make sense to do, at the time that you are building.

Kitchen Cabinetry – not something homeowners are going to change on a frequent basis, so for things like cabinetry, if you have your heart set on a particular design or style, spend the money.

Hardwood Floors – people generally can replace carpeting after a number of years, so this would be a good area that is an easy renovation for a flooring company to come in and manage for you to change out carpet to hardwood.

Exterior Finishing – to make your home easy on the eyes and the pocket book, there are many ways to compromise. Doing a combination of vinyl siding as the main finishing, and a more expensive trimming package elevates the character of the home, and still gives it a detailed look.

“You need to decide what features are going to bring true value-added quality to your bottom line and what items are purely a matter of personal preference,” says Edwards.

“So if you had to turn around and sell your home, which is your biggest asset, you’d want to be sure that you’ve gotten good value for the dollars that you spent, and that you’ll recoup all of that, if not more.”



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