

**Quiet as a church**

Quebec house of worship gets a modern makeover, H6



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Custom-built bungalow near Lake Scugog boasts luxurious space, H8

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> HOW WE LIVE

# A big reno with a small footprint

Energy-efficient and planet-friendly priorities were key for a Toronto homeowner and her builders

**HEATHER HUDSON**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It isn't easy being green. It's not cheap, either. But climate-change concerns are prompting homeowners to increasingly factor sustainability into their renovations.

"Not everybody's looking at making a change in their carbon footprint, but more people are considering it," said Brendan Charters, development manager with Eurodale Design + Build.

"And when they do, they see instant and residual benefits," he added about high initial costs resulting in long-term savings and benefits.

One homeowner who didn't need convincing is Trish McMaster, a massage therapist who hired Eurodale to do a green renovation of her 965-square-foot bungalow in midtown's Toronto's Chaplin Estates neighbourhood.

As a board member of advocacy group Environmental Defence, she considers it a moral responsibility to do her part for the future of the planet. At the same time, she was pragmatic about making a smart financial investment in her home.

The solution was to double her square footage by adding a top floor to the original footprint. She also reclaimed an unfinished basement.

Throughout it all, the priority was to employ as many sustainable and



RENÉ JOHNSTON TORONTO STAR



**NOW:** Jim Cunningham and Brendan Charters, with Eurodale Developments home builders and renovators, with the home they doubled in size — on its original bungalow footprint — and updated using carbon-friendly techniques and features, including a steel roof, solar panels and a white stain on the original first-floor brick that lets the masonry to breathe.

**THEN:** The original double-brick bungalow's foundation, masonry walls and floor joists were re-used in the sustainable reno.

GREEN continued on H4

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# GreenON rebate drove sustainable upgrades

GREEN from H1

environmentally responsible building and mechanical options as possible.

The result is a stunning restoration that actually stops traffic. “People reference the ‘white house’ we did in Chaplin Estates all the time,” Charters said.

Environmental responsibility began with the basics. By working with the original structure, they avoided adding tonnes of material to the landfill and were able to save the main floor masonry walls, foundation and floor joists.

Eurodale’s production manager, Jim Cunningham, and his team created a fully insulated envelope, including the basement floor and existing walls, with Roxul stone wool batt insulation — an alternative to ozone-depleting spray foam.

The installation of new Energy Star-rated windows and doors ensured a tight building seal while respecting the original Georgian styling that faced the street.

A mid-efficient boiler and hot water tank were replaced by a high-efficiency combo-boiler to handle in-floor hydronics throughout the home. “The condensing rates immediately changed from 80 per cent to 98 per cent, which means all but two per cent of energy used to create heat is used versus the 20 per cent that used to fly out the chimney previously,” Charters said.

The new rooftop is metal and “puts a stop to the typical cycle of asphalt, or fibreglass, shingles being ripped off and tossed in the landfill every 15-20 years,” Charters said.

And atop the new lifetime roof is a full array of solar panels that tie into the grid via a net metre. The Panasonic home energy storage system provides homeowner McMaster with an easy snapshot of real-time energy consumption throughout her house, which she can access on a screen in the mechanical room in her basement or on an app on her phone.

During summer months, cooling and fresh-air ventilation come from the attic down



RENÉ JOHNSTON TORONTO STAR

**NOW:** Bigger, energy-efficient windows illuminate the open-concept living/dining room.



EURODALE DESIGN + BUILD

**THEN:** A partial arch wall, and another to the front door, were removed and improve the overall flow.

through the second and main floors. “Purposely, no cooling was run to the basement. Instead, the ventilation system cycles air through natural convection currents and eliminates the temperature stratification so common in conventional forced air homes,” Charters said.

“The system is so efficient that after the summer, even with

Hydro’s standard delivery fees, Trish already has a \$200 account credit. And the emergency backup power stored in batteries in the basement makes her ready for the next storm that attacks our fragile electricity grid,” Charters added.

When it came to materials, Forest Stewardship Council-certified lumber was used to frame the revised interior lay-

## THE NUMBERS

1994: Year the house was purchased  
 \$255,000: Cost of house  
 \$975,000+: Cost of green renovation  
 12 months: Length of the reno

outs, second-floor addition and roof. The engineered hardwood floors came from Nadurra Wood Corporation, an eco-wood source. For finishings, McMaster chose formaldehyde-free MDF millwork cabinetry in the kitchen, bedrooms, bathroom and laundry areas. Canadian-mined quartz kitchen counters saved the emissions associated with a freightliner shipment.

Despite a complete overhaul of the house, McMaster kept her original furniture — including a 30-year-old couch and an enormous tub that’s been in her family for generations. She added new throw pillows made from her former drapes.

On the exterior, existing double-wide brick walls were preserved and new brick was stained — which allows the masonry to breathe, and creates a unified white appearance. The house overlooks a hand-dug garden, designed by local landscaping legend Marjorie Harris, with native plants to attract pollinators and birds.

Charters said the project just snuck in under Ontario’s now-defunct GreenON Rebate Program. The initial outlay for the heating and cooling system alone was 50 per cent more expensive than conventional forced air.

“Without those programs that have direct impacts on ROIs and budgets, many of these important upgrades would not be possible, and this house would have a much different carbon footprint in the end.

“If there’s \$5,000 or \$15,000 on the table to make other energy-efficient improvements, it’s an opportunity for everyone to do things like what Trish has done,” Charters said.



RENÉ JOHNSTON TORONTO STAR

**NOW:** Homeowner Trish McMaster’s enlarged bedroom draws in light from additional, Energy-Star rated windows.



EURODALE DESIGN + BUILD

**THEN:** The small master bedroom used a hot water radiator that’s been replaced with in-floor radiant heating.



RENÉ JOHNSTON TORONTO STAR

**NOW:** The kitchen was outfitted with Canadian-mined quartz counters and formaldehyde-free MDF millwork cabinetry.



EURODALE DESIGN + BUILD

**THEN:** Walls, hallways and doors kept light and air from flowing into the old kitchen.

## Make fun work with function in playroom decor

Design with durable materials and a lasting design for growing kids

**KIM COOK**  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Go bold. Stay practical. Think long term.

These are among the tips offered by interior decorators for creating a fresh, fun — even inspiring — playroom for kids.

**Foster creativity:** “I love bold choices in a playroom,” says Mel Bean, a designer in Tulsa, Okla.

In one client’s theatre room, for example, “we used a high-contrast carpet as a real show-stopper,” she says. “Another space uses black-and-white walls and floors as a backdrop for colourful art supplies, chairs, books and paintings.”

Bean recently completed a teen-friendly room in Grand Lake, Okla., with multiple bunk beds and a communal gathering space. Los Angeles designer Kate Lester has a similar ap-

proach: “Don’t take the space too seriously — have fun with it,” she says. She recently completed a safari-themed play space for a family with six- and eight-year-olds. Papier-mache animal-head sculptures adorn the walls, which are covered in a cool, black-and-white zebra print. Peel-and-stick carpet tiles make for soft lounging, and individual squares can be replaced if they get stained. The vibe is easygoing, yet the aesthetic is chic.

Lester recommends a “high/low” formula: investing in a good built-in storage piece, for example, and then including affordable pieces from stores such as Ikea.

**Keep it functional:** Hardiness matters when furnishing a playroom.

Lester puts removable floor tiles in almost every kids’ playroom she designs. They’re durable, affordable and replaceable, she says, and “can be laid out in custom designs.” There are also removable vinyl tiles in



AMY BARTLAM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A safari-themed playroom by designer Kate Lester features playful elements against a calm colour palette, including replaceable carpet tiles.

a variety of patterns; just peel and stick. She cautions homeowners to think twice about whether things that look cool are actually practical.

“A chalk wall may look cool on Instagram, but how does it work if you have three toddlers and white sofas?” she asks. “Integrating wow-factor that’s also functional is a must.”

Mixed storage is always helpful, with open bins and drawers. “Rolling bins are great under a window seat — they can be rolled out for play, then filled with toys and rolled back under the seat,” says designer Jess Cooney of Great Barrington, Mass.

For teens and older kids, being plugged in is key. Cooney tries

to incorporate connectivity for video, music and gaming in a stylish but practical way, housing all the tech equipment in a closet that little ones can’t get to and having one universal remote for the TV so you can control the content.

**Room to grow:** “Give the room the ability to grow and transition with your children,” says Lester. She suggests “play tables that can turn into homework stations or pin boards that can display art but also calendars and schedules.

“A pullout sofa is great for sleepovers down the road as kids grow,” says Cooney.

While some kid-sized furniture can be fun, include normal-sized furnishings, like sofas and media units.

“Keep the more expensive pieces in adult-scale,” says Lester. “This will not only make the space feel larger, but you won’t have to replace them as your kids grow. Also, sitting on a mini sofa isn’t fun for anyone over age five.”