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FALL 2023

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1950s TO  
*Fabulous*  
+

**A LOOK BACK**

at Nursing Students'  
Residences

Entryway

**TRANSFORMATION**

**BUILDING  
COMMUNITY**

through Cohousing



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# 1950s TO FABULOUS

## Blending the Outside In and the Inside Out

What do you get when you take a talented interior design professional and a leader of operations with a kitchen and bath company, give them a plain, vaguely Mid-century Modern 1950s two-storey, and two years to do something with it? You get an extraordinary labour of love.

### The Eyes Have It

It takes a special vision to see the potential in something ordinary. When Michael Shaw of Centennial Kitchen and Bath looked for a pandemic project to fill product shortage gaps in his renovation work schedule, he came across a 1958-built Grosvenor Park

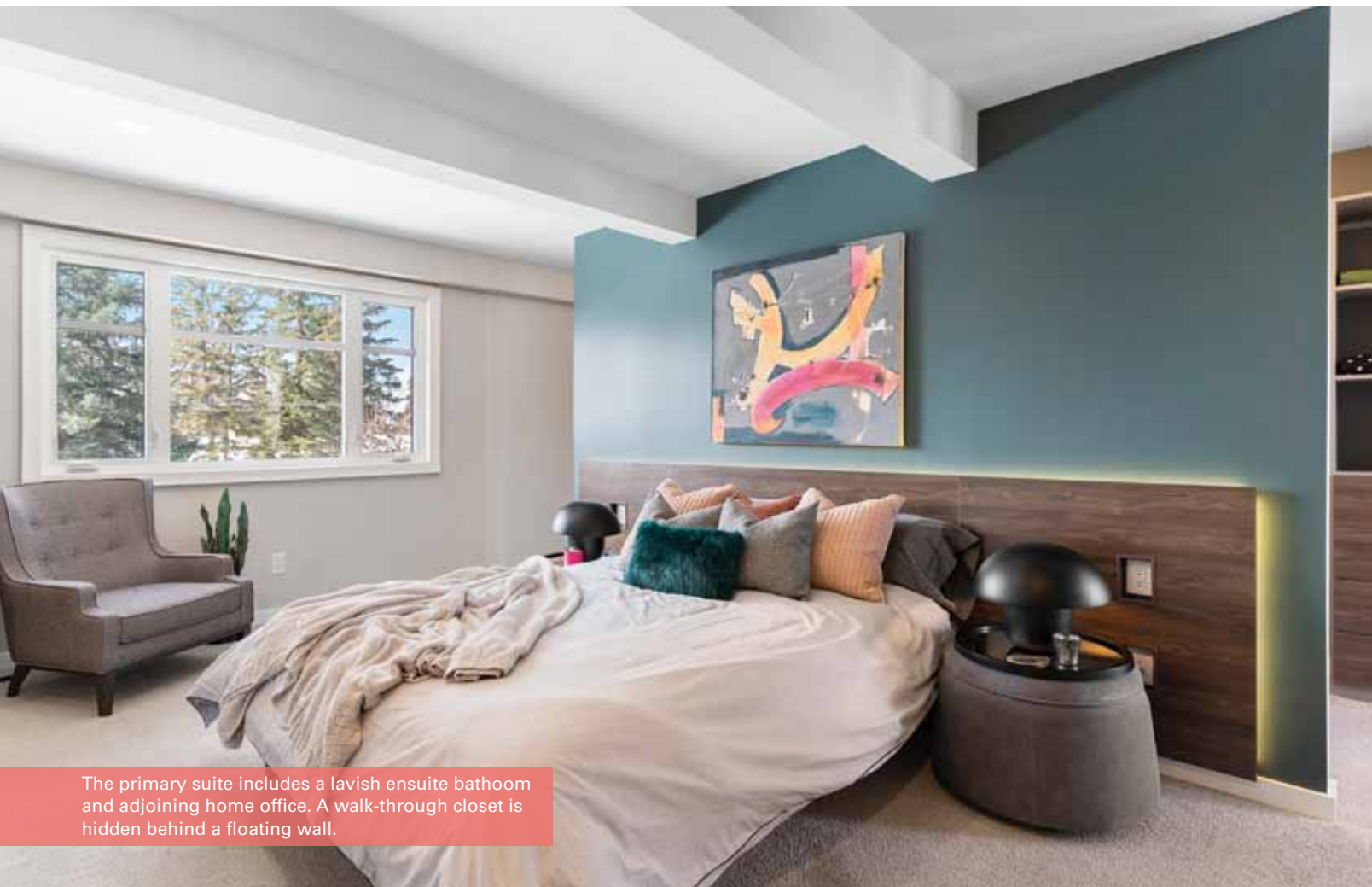
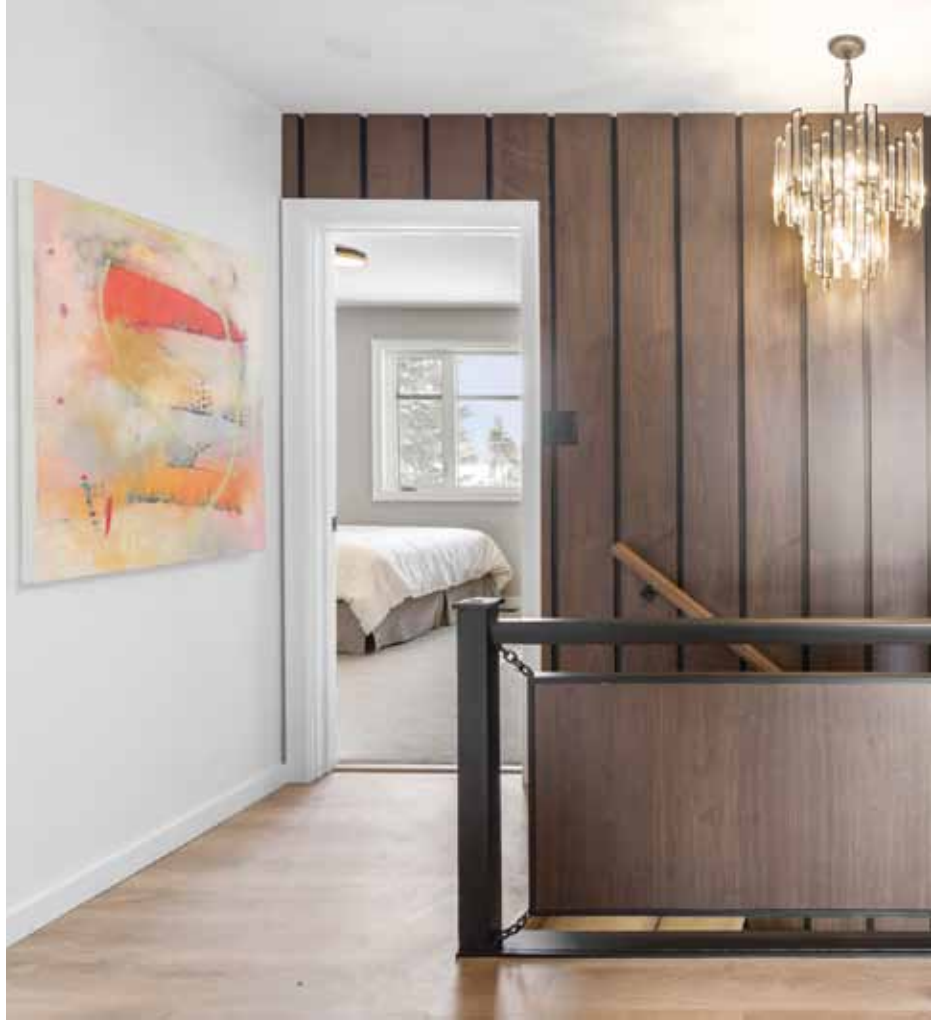
2343 sq. ft. house on a gorgeous 75 x 140-foot lot. He was intrigued, but it was already conditionally sold. When the deal fell through, armed with that good fortune, he knew just the person to call.

"Tamara Bowman owns Metric Design. We have been involved in many charity

events together and our paths have crossed often," says Michael. "A friendship sparked and we found we had a shared love of design, entertaining and, funny enough, late night karaoke." Whether those duets were the catalyst to take on a joint project of this magnitude, who can say. ➤



For Tamara Bowman of Metric Design and Michael Shaw of Centennial Plumbing, Heating and Electrical, this project was "a true partnership."



The primary suite includes a lavish ensuite bathroom and adjoining home office. A walk-through closet is hidden behind a floating wall.



A sunroom built in the late 1980s, closed off from the main floor, was opened up. A structural support beam was added and the vaulted ceiling was sheathed in shiplap. Large windows overlook an expansive backyard.

The two embarked on a complete re-design and renovation and, she says, they “touched every bit of this house inside and out.” The home on Lake Crescent was soon dubbed the Centric House for all involved in the dramatic renovation.

#### A Labour of Love

“Although we started with me solely leading the design, and Michael solely the construction, it truly became a collaboration,” says Tamara. “Where one would leave off, the other picked up. One of us would get too busy and the other would step in. One of us would hit a roadblock, the other would contribute.”

Since the project was a side hustle for both, busy regular work weeks meant fitting in evening and weekend consults and meetings.

“We didn’t go into it with

a set budget,” says Michael. “Just a commitment to build an incredible finished product the way we wanted to do it. Design disagreements were welcomed and not only improved our project but strengthened our friendship.”

#### Doing it Differently

Typically, both Metric and Centennial would have detailed construction plans and budgets before a project starts. Normally, the design would lean toward appealing to potential buyers. In this case, the pair came up with an initial plan they both liked and got to work, altering the plan as obstacles and ideas popped up.

“It isn’t the most efficient way to run a project,” admits Michael. “But it sure did lead to an incredible outcome. With no clients waiting to move in, we were able ➤



In the basement, a custom applewood bar is not only a centrepiece, but acts as camouflage for the support pillar.

A 12-foot white quartz island with forest green glazed tile backsplash and wall covering add stunning contrast. New large windows maximize natural light and backyard views.





A favourite feature is the expansive glazing in the kitchen.

to perfect our initial ideas without having to worry about missing a deadline.”

Tamara agrees. The focus was not on the budget, but even though they were “no strangers to risk or surprises,” there were still a few sleepless nights.

“We were a tiny bit carefree in matching it to the way either of us would normally do a project. But that was what made it so incredible,”

she insists. “We made sure we did this project for us, not how we would normally operate. A little bit reckless.” She laughs. “Worst case, one of us might have to move in there in the end, but we were both okay with that!”

#### **Prairie Modern the Wright Way**

The Prairie Modern Style grew out of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s insistence on a

structure being “married to the ground,” reflecting the long, low landscape of the mid-western prairies. It blends some of the Arts and Crafts style elements that connect the indoor and outdoor spaces—the connection with nature he insisted upon—and his penchant for strong geometry and massing.

For Tamara and Michael, the challenge was to convert

the house into the Prairie Modern style they felt it deserved. That meant a seamless blend of bold and massive, and minimalist pairings. Given pandemic problems, there were product delays and about mid-point, Centennial’s availability of labour was limited. Master craftsman Ryan Sader was hired to take the project to completion.

“With any renovation, ➤



you make compromises to suit the application, availability and to keep the project within budget," says Tamara. "But from my design perspective, I designed a home we both wanted to live in. A space that feels good. Surrounded by clean lines, natural materials and outside spilling in through the massive windows overlooking the generous and established yard."

#### The Main Event

The original house was about 2039 sq. ft., with a 304 sq. ft. sunroom addition built in 1989. Tamara and Michael added a 160 sq. ft. front addition. The main floor was "a massive transformation."  
"The charm of the house

The design and reno intended that inhabitants would be surrounded by clean lines, natural materials, and experience a connection to the outside.



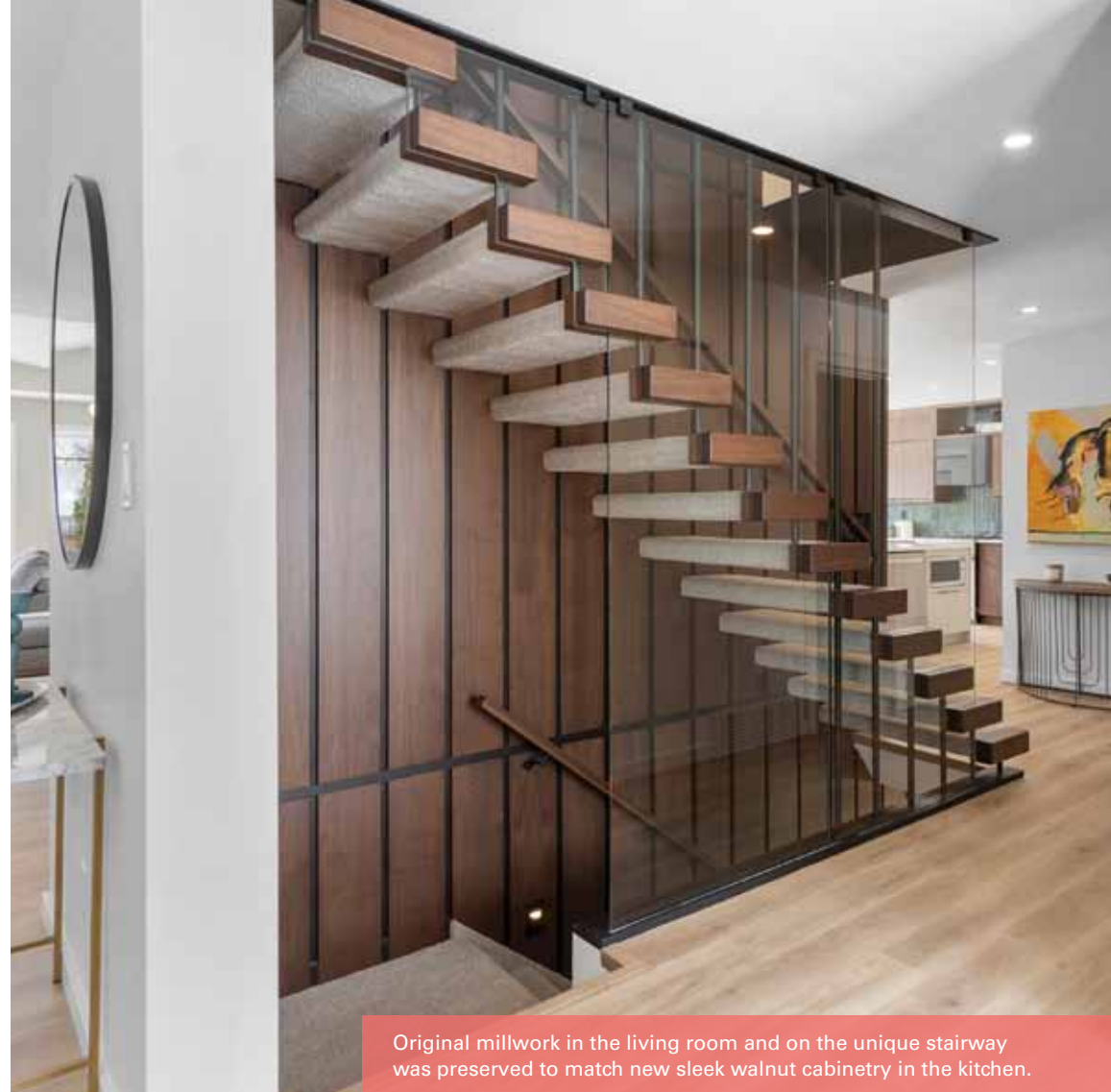
was on the inside. The exterior was very plain, and tough to describe what style it was," says Michael. "On the interior, there were some beautiful features. The millwork and the suspended staircase, both of which we worked hard to keep, were the highlights."

The project capitalized on a Mid-century Modern vibe. What that vibe lacked was flow. The main entrance opened up directly in front of the staircase, but didn't offer enough room to appreciate the feature. There was little light transfer and the view to the expansive backyard was limited. One of the biggest challenges was opening up the floor plan. Tara Reichart from Levity Engineering was "the key to our success," says Michael.

"We opened up walls, especially in the sunroom and between the kitchen and dining room," Tamara explains. "Our goal was to expand views from inside to out, we knew that we had to move the kitchen off of the outside wall. We took over a bit of an office and the dinette, and relocated the garage entrance to the front so we could reshape the kitchen into the central portion of the home. We were able to add massive windows and a large sliding patio door."

This allowed light to flood into the kitchen, dining and sunroom with a western exposure. With the addition of a second patio door, the deck became wrapped by the two door systems, connecting the spaces.

"One of my favourite features is the large window that overlooks the yard from the kitchen peninsula," she adds. "Such an incredible



Original millwork in the living room and on the unique stairway was preserved to match new sleek walnut cabinetry in the kitchen.

spot for working with a view."

The mudroom was an important addition. Having it open, spacious and close to the kitchen made it functional.

"And," says Tamara, "it allows for a gorgeous and proper entrance in the front that doesn't get jammed up with day-to-day items."

#### **Stairway to Heaven: The Second Storey**

The suspended staircase was a breathtaking original element requiring a bit of attention to bring it up to code. Thicker custom walnut caps reduced space between treads, and glass panels instead of a traditional railing add to the floating illusion.

The reconfigured ➤







A new mudroom off the kitchen allowed for the grand front entrance to remain clutter-free.



second floor included collapsing two bedrooms to create a large primary suite, ensuite, with a walk-through closet and personal office. Tamara, fond of saying “obstacles become opportunities,” notes the beams in the bedroom were an engineering necessity, but become an intriguing design feature.

They felt a convenient upstairs laundry was a “no brainer.” Instead of a dark workplace, it features a large bank of windows for abundant natural light, and bench seating.

#### Exterior Wow

The exterior was an important focus. They wanted to pay tribute to the area, the era, the special elements, and the landscape, and spent “a ton of time ensuring we got this right.”

The Prairie Style has a pronounced roof and more finite modern detailing, so changing the siding detail, adjusting materials and window sizes, and adding the porch was important. The front addition created a grander entrance, typical of this style.

“We needed to do a better job of blending the inside out and the outside in,” Tamara explains. “On the inside with the windows and spaces all

opened up, you feel as though you are one with the yard.”

#### Hitting the Nail

“The previous owners were there for years, and they even had mobility devices in the house to support aging in place,” says Tamara. “The family came back to view the space after it was complete and they couldn’t believe the transformation. They felt so proud to be able to see the home given this new life.”

But even as they nailed the project, it was time to let it go. “This is always a tough one for me. I get very invested in my projects,” says Tamara. “The house sold in just over a month to a wonderful retired couple.”

“In the end, I loved the home and I actually did want to live there, as did the majority of others who came through it,” she adds.

Michael agrees not restricting their vision was their best decision.

“We didn’t let our budget constrain us on this project,” he says. “We were confident that with such an incredible lot on one of Saskatoon’s best streets, we could invest what we needed to as long as the finished product was incredible.” (H)

*Karin Melberg Schwier*