



Making a house a Home

Couple's first renovation a smashing success

BY PAMELA EADIE
Citizen advertising features

Anne and Gene lived in 13 different homes all over the world during the first 15 years of their marriage. In 1992, they purchased a home in Kanata, and have lived there ever since. But they completed their first-ever renovation only recently.

"Our home had a standard oak builder's kitchen; it was closed in, and had linoleum tile," Anne explains. "It had an eating area just for a table that had as much floor space as the kitchen itself, so it was quite awkward."

When they purchased their home, it was only a couple years old. But as time passed, the tree saplings and shrubs outside grew into full-sized trees and bushes, compromising the sun's ability to light the home. "We weren't getting a lot of light anymore," Anne says.

They wanted to open the kitchen up to the formal dining room and the family room, as well as extend it into the eat-in dining area. Using graph paper, they drew up a rough design. It was a fundraising auction for REACH that started the ball rolling, when Anne and Gene were the successful bidders on a consult with designer Linda Nolan of Linda Nolan Interiors.

"She took our basic plan, improved it, and then we hired her to do the project management," says Gene.

Their original plan needed some revision, as they couldn't simply remove load bearing walls. Ultimately a pillar in the centre of the room had to stay, and so the kitchen's centrepiece island had to be built around it.

It was through Linda that the couple found Bill's Custom Cabinets. "He was very responsive to the changes we needed to make as we went along," Anne says. "It was a wonderful experience."



Top right: A wall of cabinets with a pass through separates the dining room and kitchen.
Left: A peek through the pass through into the kitchen.

Bottom: A granite-topped island serves as the kitchen's centrepiece.

The kitchen now opens to the formal dining room...sort of. Anne wanted to protect the sense of openness, but also likes there to be a clear separation between the kitchen and the eating area. The solution? A large semi-wall of lit-up, double sided cabinets, with a pass through.

Everything about the colours in the kitchen is intended to increase the sense of light and airiness in the home. The new kitchen features off-white cabinetry, with glass insets in some of the doors. To show off Anne and Gene's crystal collection, the cabinets all light up and many are mirrored. The countertops, including that of the large island, are granite. The backsplash features small glass, ceramic, and marble bricks. The floor is oak hardwood, to match up with an earlier flooring job on the main floor. "We've kept some of the oak look of the original kitchen, but we've diluted it," Anne says with a smile.

The kitchen, and indeed most areas in the home, is painted what Gene and Anne call "Tuscan yellow." This was a compromise; after years of living in military housing, Gene loathes beige, and wanted something bright and cheerful. "When your house is as open as ours is, you can't have different colours all over," Anne says.



PHOTOS: PAMELA EADIE, OTTAWA CITIZEN

Gone is the "California-style" lowered ceiling in the kitchen, complete with fluorescent lighting. In its place, pot lighting adorns the kitchen and family room. Crown mouldings throughout the family room cleverly hide wiring for the pot lights, making their installation much simpler. All new Jenn-Air appliances were also installed, as well as a vacuum feature that's housed in the island; just sweep up the dust to within its reach, and the vacuum

swooshes it away.

Anne and Gene say the experience has shown them the importance of hiring skilled trades people to perform complex technical work. "We don't have the time or experience to do project management," Gene says. "It's the smartest and cheapest way to do anything."

The kitchen became operational in late-May, after being

under construction for a few months. After years of constant moving, Anne and Gene are finally not only putting down roots, but making the home truly their own. They couldn't be happier with their new living space.

"It's been just great. We are very happy with the result, and with every tradesperson," Anne says. "And with the cabinet lights on, the place just glows at night."

Stop before you build! You may need a permit for that.

BY TERRY TINKESS
Citizen advertising features

Much like for smart phones and mp3 players, for which there's an app for everything, when it comes to permits, there's a permit for just about everything too.

Changes in provincial building codes and other related legislation as well as new or expanded municipal bylaws have created a sea of red tape that can seem daunting to the person who just wants to add a second bathroom, replace their deck or build a garden shed.

So how do you know if you even

need a permit? Arlene Gregoire, director and chief building official of building code services for the City of Ottawa, says there are a number of resources available to make doing the right thing a bit easier.

"There is an extensive web page that details as much as is possible," Ms. Gregoire says. "Every construction project is different, so it is difficult to have a comprehensive list, but we do have on our website, Ottawa.ca, under building permits, a description aimed at homeowners and small projects, to advise if a permit is required or not."

Ultimately, the best advice is that if you are not sure, then ask.

You can reach the City of Ottawa by dialing 311, and asking to be transferred to the appropriate department.

When it comes to permits, ignorance is not bliss. Should you make the decision to go ahead with your property improvement without a permit and you risk not only having to pay a substantial fine, but also being required to demolish the work that was done.

"Not only could the construction not comply with the building code, but it could also not be in compliance with the zoning," Ms. Gregoire says. "You don't want to invest all that time and money and discover that it is actually a cloud on your title, and you can't

sell the home because it is non-compliant. It is best to do your homework."

There is, according to Ms. Gregoire, a lot of bad information out there. "Some people think that if you don't touch the outside wall, you can do whatever inside, and that is incorrect.

"There are walls that are non-bearing but a lot of building elements are there for a reason, so they should be checking before starting any work."

There is also the train of thought that if it is good enough for the present owner, that should be all that matters. However, the building code, which is really just

a minimum standard, looks far beyond the present owner.

"Our mandate is really aimed at the public, forever," Ms. Gregoire says. "We're really looking at the third owner, three times removed, what it means to them."

For more information on whether you may need a building permit and how to go about obtaining one, visit the City of Ottawa web site (www.ottawa.ca) and click on building permits. You will find a wealth of useful information that might save you some money, but that could also help you build for the future as well as the present.