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THE NOT SO BIG HOUSE

BY ANDREA TOMKINS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUZANNE BIRD

For most people thinking about home design, the first source of inspiration usually comes from a stack of magazines. For Jim Busko and Susan MacKinnon, it came from a movie.

“It was the beach house in *Something’s Gotta Give* with Diane Keaton,” laughs Jim, a VP at a high-tech firm. “We watched it in slow motion three times.”

Fast forward a couple of years and the result is a light-filled, elegant and spacious home nestled in a very urban setting, a few minutes’ walk from the hustle and bustle of Westboro Village.

“We wanted to live in a place where we could walk to everything, like stores and restaurants,” says Susan, an administrator for a software company.

The couple considered the Glebe and Westboro and eventually settled on the latter when opportunity knocked in the form of a “land only” deal that fit their needs. But before they could start building their inspired vision, an existing home on the property needed to be removed.

“We put the house on Kijiji,” says Jim. “Buyer moves at own cost. We hoped someone would cart the house away, but in the end, we just opened it up to be stripped for parts.” People carted away various pieces of the structure before it was demolished, from windows to old tools that were left in the basement.

Jim and Susan spent six months interviewing architects for the new build. Originally there were 11 in the running, and after a lengthy process they happily narrowed it down to Malcolm Wildeboer of **Vandenberg & Wildeboer Architects Inc.**

“You want to get it right,” explains Jim. He says Malcolm impressed them from the start. “He was the only one who came to the lot to take photos... even before we hired him.” *Continued on page 20*





The living room's fireplace mantel is dressed up with a stunning green garland of cymbidium orchids, anthuriums, fuji mums and goldcrest cypress. (Tivoli Florist)

OPPOSITE - FROM LEFT:

Homeowners Susan MacKinnon and Jim Busko.

Architectural detail is evident throughout the home's exterior including the front veranda.

An elegantly crafted newel post turns the utilitarian staircase into a work of art. Here the post is lavishly decorated for the holiday season.

OPPOSITE TOP: The welcoming exterior of the new home fits in nicely with the long established neighbourhood.

feature



ABOVE: The well thought-out kitchen features a cosy built-in banquette and additional seating around the large island.

RIGHT: A three-season sun room with warm basswood ceiling offers a beautiful extension to the main floor living space.

BOTTOM: The home is full of hidden secrets including this liquor cabinet which is concealed inside what appears to be a supporting pillar.

The next stage was to find the right builder. With Malcolm's guidance they went with Brad Snelling of **D.C. Snelling Ltd.**

One of their primary concerns was fitting in with the neighbours. In fact, keen to start off on the right foot, Jim and Susan showed neighbours the building plans to let them know what was coming. But it was more than just fitting in with the people, they also wanted their new home to fit the character of the existing neighbourhood.

At 2,500 sq. ft., this two-storey home makes smart use of space. Largely open concept in design, the owners embraced the principles outlined in architect and best-selling author Sarah Susanka's *"The Not So Big House."*

The homeowners say Susanka's ideas resonated deeply with them. From her thoughts on balancing open spaces with cosy corners and spending on the details, to making efficient use of liveable space; their dog-eared copy of the book became an integral piece in their planning.

"We had a wish list for every room," says Jim. "We came pretty close to getting everything we wanted." Included in this list was a second-floor library with built-in bookcase and desk, a fully finished basement with a large family room and even a cleverly designed exercise room that features glass panels instead of traditional style walls.

Main spaces on the first floor are smartly divided in ways that still remain true to open-concept living. Lighting, coffered ceilings, use of trim and custom cabinetry all add to the illusion of room divisions that aren't really there.

The layout is perfectly suited for entertaining. The living and dining rooms are partially divided by custom cabinetry designed to create a half-wall effect.

American cherry floors, which bring the rooms together as much as they are designed to be separate, were sanded by hand, on site.



The home is full of hidden secrets. The main floor laundry room not only features slim drying racks that fold out from the wall, but a laundry chute as well; the upper half of which is neatly hidden behind a seemingly innocent mirror off the master bedroom. The kitchen pantry is camouflaged to look like a regular section of wall space and the liquor cabinet, well, you'd never find it if you didn't know where to look. It's contained inside what appears to be a supporting pillar between the dining and living rooms.

The kitchen is a foodie's dream come true. Brian Kendel of **Heritage Kitchens** brought together classic elements to make this well-used space into something functional and beautiful that won't go out of style. "You don't want something too trendy," says Susan, referring to the creme coloured subway tile that runs the length of the elegant black countertop. "It has to last." *Continued on page 22*

feature



TOP LEFT: A classic black and white motif wallpaper adds a touch of sophistication to the powder room.

TOP RIGHT: The layout of the main floor is ideal for entertaining. Here the table is beautifully set to receive guests.

FAR LEFT: Laundry becomes less of a chore in this smartly designed room with built-in laundry chute.

LEFT: The homeowners chose to convert a bedroom into a library with the simple addition of a beautiful built-in bookcase and workspace.

The kitchen features a custom cherrywood table by John Zeitoun of **River Woodworks** and a built-in banquette, which has become a special corner for reading the newspaper over a cup of coffee. Stainless steel appliances from **Universal Appliance** complete the picture.

A three-season sunroom that wings off the kitchen is a comfortable hideaway. With its own fireplace, ceiling fan, and hard plastic windows that collapse up or down in a way that traditional glass windows cannot, the room offers a beautiful extension to the main floor living space.

Interior designer Michael Courdin of **Michael Courdin Designs** understood Jim and Sue's design needs and helped the couple make their house a home. Warm tones flow naturally throughout. Custom window coverings by **C&M Textiles** and upholstery by **Da Silva Upholstery** keep

true to the ideals of warmth and comfort without sacrificing elegance. Artful windows from **Bowen Windows** let lots of natural light filter in. Lighting by **Marchand Electrical** and **Arecco Lighting** was a major part of the design plan, creating a sense of overall comfort and intimacy despite the main living areas being so open. Extra lighting added in the ceiling of the living room for example, makes this spacious room feel cosy and warm.

A wood-burning fireplace in the living room by **Hubert Heating** helps set the scene for a picturesque winter holiday. Beautifully decorated by Michael Corbeil of **Tivoli Florist** in seasonal greenery, the room is ready for celebration, which is fitting. This will be Jim and Susan's first Christmas in their completed home, giving them cause to celebrate. **OH**