

Hip to this House



photos by John Schwirtlich | certainimages.com

The Consenheim home on Morrissey Place started off as a 70s bungalow but now makes a seriously modern first impression.

By Shannon Linden

Disco had its day, but homeowners Les and Ester Consenheim weren't digging their 1970s style house in lower Sahali.

A modern family with vision for the future, they longed for a pad that was a little more copacetic with their lifestyle.

Funky was fine back in the dancing decade, but now their home sizzles with contemporary style, its unique look and feel the result of an ambitious renovation.

Working within the parameters of an original structure, remodeling is notoriously challenging as homeowners, designers, and contractors work together to match the body of the new house with the bones that hold the old home together.

The work required to update the Consenheim home was so extensive, the contractor, DW Builders, suggested it was more a "re-do" than a "reno."

"This is the original house we bought when we set up in Kamloops 13 years ago," Ester explains.



Left: Warm wood, black trim and clean lines define the stylish ambience in the Consenheim's grand room. Above: Floor-to-ceiling windows in the master bedroom afford a splendid view of the valley. The sliding barn door leads to the luxurious ensuite.

"I grew up here," she says, "But Les is a Vancouver boy. We met at college and I convinced him to move here."

Now a financial advisor and owner and operator of Raymond James Ltd., Les specializes in bringing big dreams into being.

"Les started a house binder years ago," Ester explains. "We collected photos from various magazines and dreamed."

Having envisioned their ideal home, the couple took location and lifestyle into consideration.

"At first we contemplated an estate type of lot," Les says. "But the trade off would be driving. Coming from

Vancouver, commuting was a big issue."

Located at the end of a cul-de-sac backing onto a park, with a lovely view of the mountains, city, and river, the Consenheims concluded the location of their original home already boasted the best of both worlds: beauty and privacy, plus convenience.

"I joke with my buddies that the heated seats in my car are still cold when I get to work," Les grins. "It's a three-minute drive."

"This is the kids' neighborhood," Ester adds. "Our daughter, Victoria, is in Grade 12 and our son, Riley, is in eight. We couldn't take them from their friends."

Deciding to work with what they had where they were, the Consenheims committed themselves to 18 months of renovations. "The place was gutted," Les says, shaking his head in remembrance of the dusty

days when the project was in its infancy.

"We had to move out."

The couple employed Vancouver-based designer D'Arcy Jones to oversee the project. Not only did they admire the work Mr. Jones did on a friend's house, they appreciated his commitment to continuity of flow.

"In my mind, contemporary means lines that never change," Les says. "You'll only see two types of wood in this house: walnut and alder. By utilizing few different materials, you avoid clutter."

From the outside in, consistency is king. The sleek driveway leads vehicles to a suspended concrete slab in the carport, while matching concrete stairs run along the drive, leading foot traffic to the home's welcoming glass door.

Clean and simple, the front of the house offers some surprising elements of design. A stucco wall on the inside of the carport looks sharp while providing privacy for the family indoors, as well as blocking the view of parked vehicles. A row of rectangular windows runs along the bottom of the stucco piece, allowing light to flow into the home from the bottom up, as well as adding an interesting artistic touch.

Triangular windows crown the stucco wall, allowing natural light to flow from the outside to the grand room within, offering a geometrically pleasing finish to the area. The same windows are repeated on the opposite, view side of the house, beautifully book-ending the grand room area, as well as providing a dramatic, street-side view straight through to the back, and outside again.

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Not a detail has been overlooked, as even the ceiling of the garage has been finished in white and illuminated with recessed pot lights, mimicking the look and feel of the kitchen and adjoining family room ceiling.

"We love the way the ceiling flows from the outside in," Ester comments. "It's so light, it looks like it floats, like hanging white sheets."

No space has been wasted in this 3,300-square-foot home. From the front entrance, where sleek cabinetry hides coats and shoes, to the adjoining wall that provides similar storage but also acts as a privacy wall, design fundamentals are as striking as they are practical.

"We love how people enter our home in anticipation of what's around the corner of this wall," Esther says.

"The idea came from D'Arcy Jones," Les explains. "He believes when a visitor first enters a house, the rest of the home should remain invisible until the guest has been invited in."

Lit by loads of natural light from the multitude of windows as well as skylights, the kitchen is a work of art. Generous cabinetry, designed by Excel Industries, are sleek yet warm, the alder finish exuding an earthy glow.

A trio of white cupboards sits in surprise between the double wall ovens and window, an interesting twist in the otherwise golden line.

A beautiful built-in bar decorates the opposite wall, while a custom-designed table by Wayne Chizma compliments the area. A cozy window seat invites visitors to curl up and wrap themselves in



The outdoor sitting area, sheltered by the overhang and warmed by a gas fireplace, is a delightful spot for socializing.

the warmth of the room, seemingly entwined in the arms of leafy branches of the cherry tree right outside.

Seamless quartz countertops and walnut-covered appliances in the kitchen, a fabulous fireplace surrounded by the same stucco as outside, a tucked-away television cabinet and contemporary French doors from the living room to the deck complete the smooth and sparkling grand area.

With such an inspiring view as a backdrop, the decision was made not to distract the eye with window treatments — nor are there any moldings or baseboards in the house. The walls have been finished with drywall return so the look is clean and clutter-free.

Like the bottom of a glass boat invites sailors

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to view marine life beneath the water, a square sheet of glass embedded on the hallway floor leading to the master bedroom beckons sunshine from an overhead skylight to seep through, illuminating what would otherwise be a dark corner in the basement below.

And the master itself? With a custom-built bed overlooking the in-ground pool, park and view, along with specially designed barn doors that slide open to reveal a state-of-the-art ensuite, it's simply spectacular. With a square soaker tub, dual sinks, and his and her walk-in closets, it's easy to see why the Consenheims call it paradise.

"We thought about buying on the lake or up at Sun Peaks," Les says, "But we wanted to create a vacation-style home we could return to everyday."

Fantastic kids' rooms are located downstairs and there are plans for a wine room. A wonderful media center that opens up to a sumptuous poolside seating area warmed by a fabulous gas fireplace add to the casually elegant ambience of the home, inviting family and friends to pour a glass of wine and curl up for conversation.

Of course, the Sonos sound system also suggests the music occasionally gets cranked, and judging by the twinkle in Ester's eye, this family's hip to the beat.

"We have such a good time in this house," she says. "We love coming home." ●

Homes for the Holidays

You've seen the pictures. Now you can see the Consenheims' lovely home — and four other special houses — for yourself.

And they'll be all decked out in Christmas finery as part of Homes for the Holidays 2009.

A tradition in Kamloops, the tour features five very distinct local homes dressed for the coming Christmas celebration. This year's tour will include a heritage home and an upscale town home, as well as contemporary homes.

Thanks to volunteers with United Way Community Partner Associations, local decorators and retail suppliers, and of course homeowners, the tour raises tens of thousands of dollars for our community each year.

Tour dates are Nov. 21 and 22. Tickets are \$25 each and can be picked up at any branch of the Royal Bank.

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