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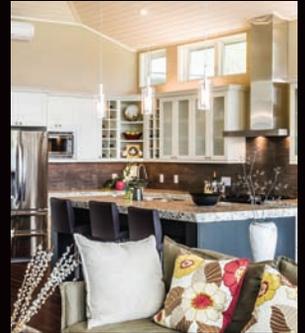
# Good LIFE



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# Miracle at

# McCONKEY PLACE



LIVING ROOM

BY PATTI VIPOND | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CANDICE MANASTERSKY

AFTER 20-PLUS YEARS, THIS FAMILY HOME WAS READY FOR A RENOVATION. BUT WHO KNEW PAINT, PLANNING AND A PROFESSIONAL INTERIOR DESIGNER WOULD TRANSFORM IT?

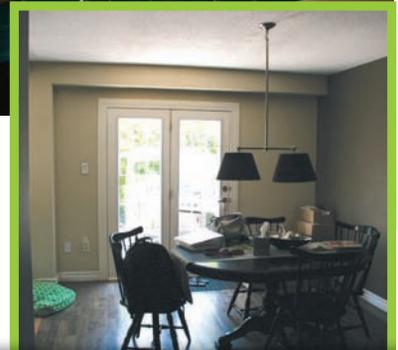
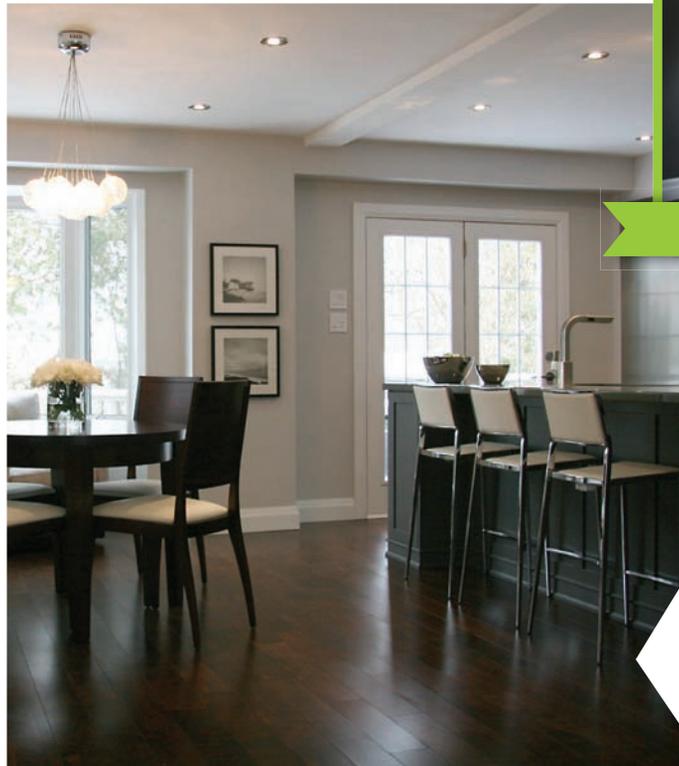
Ten years ago, Susan and Dale Elliott looked carefully around the main floor of their family's home on McConkey Place in Barrie and felt something was lacking in the décor department. But a full-on renovation of the original kitchen, living room and front hall foyer of the circa 1980s residence seemed fraught with decisions and, frankly, a bit overwhelming. Where do you start? Daily life with their daughters and navigating two busy careers superseded serious consideration of an interior redesign.

However, in 2013, as empty nesters, the Elliotts revisited the question of how the main floor could be revamped to better serve their needs. The result was a visit to recommended interior designer



BEFORE





## BEFORE

With no wall between the two rooms, a new entrance for the living room and a wall built where the hallway formerly entered the kitchen, the new main floor layout creates an airy open-concept living room/kitchen with more floor space.

Catherine Staples, owner of Staples Design Group in Barrie.

“The Elliotts first came in during June and the project was completed by October,” says Catherine, who has headed the award-winning full-service interior design firm for five years. “Every project is different and this one was great. The clients were wonderful. They were quick to make decisions and allowed us to manage the whole project. In that way, we were able to do it on budget and on time.”

The Elliotts’ 679-square-foot main floor was divided into living room and kitchen areas by a structural wall. Despite large windows in both rooms, the spaces were gloomy and felt cramped. The living room’s deep taupe walls, black leather couches and dark brown armchairs, though chic in their day, now created a cave-like atmosphere. Neutral walls in the kitchen were dimmed by the mismatched tile and wood

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floor, dated honey-coloured cabinets and a dark wood dining set. The light from the kitchen’s attractive glass French doors and generous bay window were going to waste.

Catherine and her design team consulted with the Elliots to find out what they wanted from those rooms.

“We found the need was to change the layout to suit how they wanted to function in the space. Their family is growing and the new layout gives them the opportunity to have a larger dining space. It’s a much better layout.”

With no wall between the two rooms, a new entrance for the living room and a wall built where the hallway formerly entered the kitchen, the new main floor layout creates an airy open-concept living room/kitchen with more floor space. However, the finishings make it feel even more spacious. Fresh white walls and ceilings painted in Benjamin Moore’s Abalone (#2108-60) appear set back and lofty. Pearly pantry cabinets, built-in by Norcab Kitchen & Millwork Co. Inc. in Barrie, give an illusion of height to a dining area accentuated by soft recessed lighting and warm maple wood flooring. Light from the front and rear windows now flood the space. The transformation is so complete that it hardly looks like the same house.

“It’s completely different. It’s a dramatic before and after. It was a basic builder’s house and they don’t do any of the extra lighting when they build. It’s nice when you are designing a complete plan because you incorporate the lighting into the plan. You know where the tables and all the cabinets are going to be so it makes things much easier in that respect. The recessed lighting just cleaned things up and provides a much better quality of lighting.”

The kitchen’s appliance and dining areas were switched and a custom bar with Caesarstone counter and seating was added in between. The couple treated themselves to new top »

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The front hall foyer looks much bigger but it is exactly the same size. Travertine stone makes the space appear wider.



line Thermador appliances including a built-in coffee maker, dishwasher, gas cooktop, wall oven, microwave and steam oven – an increasingly popular kitchen item that applies steam to moisten food for healthier cooking. A creamy white Birch split stone backsplash complements the upper cabinets' glossy finish and the lower ones' matte finish. The contrast in textures adds a custom detail in a contemporary finish. A cozy armchair set in the formerly

underutilized bay window is now a perfect place to read or sit and chat after dinner.

In the living room, snowy walls, ceiling and a new lighting scheme have obliterated the former gloom. The exterior wall now sports a contemporary floor-to-ceiling split rock granite fireplace flanked by sleek custom cabinets fit flush. "We had the depth of the fireplace to deal with and we took advantage of it."

New furniture pieces were selected for the

living room's updated look with help from their interior designer. Inviting armchairs, smooth glass lamps with white shades and a cushiony chocolate couch with punchy green and striped pillows are watched over by black and white photos of the Elliott children.

"We were able to look for furniture that fit to scale," says Catherine, whose company's showroom allows the designers to source furnishings from all over including several unique and different lines. "That was all part of the initial budget from the planning stage and we worked within it. When it comes to selecting furnishings, that's where we can help. We narrow the choices down to about three. Once the clients approve the plan and decide where they want the furniture, we pull out all the finishes and take them through an exercise of finding what looks they are trying to achieve and what appeals to their eye. Then we pull out three finishes that work and are within the budget. The Elliotts work full-time and travel often so this helped save them a lot of time."

In the front hall foyer, a unique mirror set behind a custom floating shelf reflects lambent light from the white walls and entryway windows. The Travertine stone floor installed in the foyer and hallway makes the space look substantially wider.

"It does look much bigger but it is exactly the same size. Colour can make such a difference. Also, having a mirror cut at a local mirror or glass store makes a great change but doesn't take much to do. Changing the railing on the staircase modernized the foyer as well."

With a gradual renovation of their home's second floor completed before the main floor renovation, the couple now has a virtually new home.

"We did the reveal, and Susan cried," says Catherine. "It is a much more contemporary looking home now."

The Elliotts are delighted with their 'new' home.

"I continually marvel at how the transformation of our main floor has added not only to the day to day function of our lives but more importantly the value it has added when we host our family and friends," says Susan. "The change has been priceless and it still amazes me how much larger the main floor seems from the renovations. There is not one thing I would change."

Describing her company as a one-stop shop that creates designs and sources contractors and trades, Catherine and her team carried the



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**DESIGN TIP:** Don't be afraid to use white on your walls. It is a great energy colour that comes in several shades and makes spaces look bigger.



Elliotts' project from design, through the build, to the time the couple returned home after an enjoyable stay with a daughter.

"No one person can know everything so we are a team of five designers," says Catherine. "We brainstorm ideas together. I have always had Henry Ford's philosophy. He didn't know how to build a car, but he surrounded himself with all of the genius that he needed to build a car. Our philosophy is the same."

For homeowners considering a renovation, here are a few suggestions from Catherine:

Don't be afraid to use white on your walls. It is a great energy colour that comes in several shades and makes spaces look bigger.

If you are thinking about moving, remember it is more cost effective to stay in your home and renovate than to move. If you love the neighbourhood but can't stand your basement, talk to an interior designer before you list.

Above all, plan your renovation thoroughly before you buy a can of paint or a box of nails.

"If you plan properly before you start, everything can be ordered so that when the contractor is ready, everything is ready to go," advises Catherine. "Then you finish the project much faster and are not out of your house for too long. It's worth investing in having the proper plans done in advance."

The Elliotts know the wisdom of that advice as they enjoy their luminous new living space at McConkey Place. 