

Homes



The dream kitchen features a hidden pantry. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CORNERSTONE DESIGN & BUILD



Plan bedrooms that grow with each child's needs.

DESIGNER TACKLES RENOVATION FOR HER GROWING FAMILY

Vision should work for today and 'for many years to come'

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Special to Postmedia Network

Designer Lindsay Thornton looks at beautiful spaces all day and dreams up ideas for a living but says trying to pick a style for her own home renovation was like trying to pick a favourite child.

"It's also a lot harder to hold yourself to a budget versus a client," says the founder and creative director of Cornerstone Design & Build in Oakville. "I really benefitted from my team, who was able to help think clearly when I was getting tired of making decisions."

In 2019, Thornton and her husband purchased a 2,500-square-foot bungalow that backs onto an environmentally-protected forest in Midhurst, about an hour north of Toronto.



Lindsay Thornton, founder and creative director of Cornerstone Design & Build.

The previous owners had completely gutted the home, which was built in 1989 and is located on a quiet, dead-end street, but gave up mid-reno and put it on the market.

'AN EMPTY SHELL'

"Lucky for us, this three-bedroom, four-bathroom home was an empty shell when we got the keys, and we



Think multi-functional components when designing children's rooms.

could transform it to our tastes and needs," saving both time and money, Thornton reports.

"Our goal in finishing the home was to open up the back of the home with larger windows, create a dream kitchen with a hidden pantry, create a designated home office for myself and create a dream backyard with a pool," she says.

The kids were aged one, three and five when they moved into the house, so the couple designed the home to grow and adapt with their family.

Because they like to host large extended family gatherings several times a year, a large dining room and expansive outdoor space were musts.

While many of Thornton's clients are hesitant to renovate when their kids are little, she finds a decade or more can pass before a family eventually transforms their house.

"You need a home that is functional for how you live today and love to come home to," she says. "There are so many durable materials on the market today and stylish options that you need not fret and delay any longer creating a stylish yet functioning home."

When renovating for a growing family, Thornton urges you to have a clear picture of what you want and will need from each room. "It should be something that will work for your family now and for many years to come, so that you do not have to keep renovating."

That might include changing the existing floor plan, adjusting the layout of the rooms, taking space from one area and giving it to another, and removing internal walls.

"Needs evolve," Thornton says. "Kids don't stay in cribs or need a playroom forever either. We left most of our basement as a large open playroom for the time being and have plans in the future to use that space as two bedrooms when our kids want their own spaces."

When planning children's rooms, think multifunctional components. "With our girls' room, we designed the room around a stunning bunkbed that could pull apart when our daughter was out of a crib but needed the top rail for a year or so as a transition bed. Now that they are older, we have put the bunkbed back to its original format and replaced the crib area with a desk."

The couple also opted to install a shower instead of a tub in the kids' bathroom. "We had the soaker tub in our primary ensuite, so we used that for awhile when they were little, but we knew they would want a shower later on," says Thornton.

Knowing they might one day get a dog informed the family's decision to install hardwood featuring plenty of movement and natural wood veins. "These floors hide so much dirt, can take toys being dropped on them and do not get scratched by our now massive dog," she says of their German Shepherd "I am so glad we invested in flooring that could handle our family as they were growing up in the home."

TWO PHASES

The family divided the renovation into two main phases: a four-month renovation of the home's interior and exterior, followed a year-and-a-half later by the backyard renovation.

They moved in midway through the first phase without any appliances, kitchen sink or washer and dryer hooked up.

"I cleaned dishes in the kids' bath sink and really thought of giving up when our whole family got the stomach flu without a washing machine," Thornton says. "We did a lot of outdoor living that summer."

Her favourite features include a hidden pantry that was created by taking five feet from the dining room, which was originally a sunken living room, and integrated into the kitchen.

"Some people thought we should raise up the floor as the sunken idea is very dated, but I loved how it created a dramatic space for the dining room and am so glad we kept it that way."

Outdoors, the family added an 1,100-square-foot deck, pool and sauna so they could live outside as much as possible. The deck was built around a huge oak tree, which acts as a massive umbrella, and has a seating area, Thornton notes.