by Karen Attwell photos by Jared Sych

Thrifty transformation

The kitchen and bathrooms get top billing in this budget-friendly renovation

Andrew and Allison Stordeur's northwest Calgary home is the decor embodiment of its owners — open, warm, engaging and brimming with contrast. Tailored sofas are paired with rustic, wide-plank floors rippling with dark accents, and bright yellows and blues stand out against furnishings with an industrial edge.

When the couple moved to Calgary after six years in Toronto, they knew they were done with commutes. They needed a family home for their toddler son, Josh, and their 100-pound-plus golden retriever, Gus. However, they also wanted to find a mature neighbourhood with good proximity to downtown, schools and parks, as well as the airport and the mountains.

They decided to tackle their wish list by finding the right location first. Decor and layout, they reasoned, could be changed. What they found was a dated, 1960s four-level split with an L-shaped living and dining room wrapped around the kitchen; however, the now 2,300-square-foot, three-bedroom property offered a large yard, double detached garage and great access to schools and parks. It also had a rare master bedroom ensuite that could be reconfigured.

Once they found the house, the Stordeurs started planning the renovation. "We interviewed three really strong designers and we liked each one of them," says Allison. They eventually decided to go with Calgary-based designer Alykhan Velji. "We just really liked Aly's energy."

Velji says he was excited about the project from the start because of its potential to be so transformational. "I knew that we had to take the walls down, for sure," says Velji, who delights in giving his clients homes that suit their personalities. He says he played with

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Our Favourite Room: Kitchen

Allison and Andrew Stordeur decided early in their renovation planning that they wanted to invest in the kitchen.

Allison appreciates many things about the new kitchen. "It's bright. It gives me a lot of freedom to do anything," she says. "Baking. Cooking. Taking care of [son] Josh. It's everything I was hoping for, and then some. As a mom, I like that I can be doing everything I need to do and stand in the kitchen and watch Josh in the yard. It's a nice feeling to know that, in five or six years, it's going to be the same."

Adds Andrew: "To have an open-concept kitchen like that, an area you can entertain in and have a family dinner, I think that's really cool. The table's high enough that I can use it, but not so high that other people who aren't 6' 6" can't enjoy it."

Three oversized pendant lamps create a dramatic focal point above the table-style island.

pattern and texture to achieve this goal and used a number of styles in the interior. "When you mix different styles, it gives so much more character."

Things gained momentum from there. The couple kept the original detail in the home's ceilings, but, other than that, almost everything was changed. "It was down to the studs," says Allison. She says they intended to retain the original oak hardwood to patch and restain it, but, as the project progressed, it proved more cost-effective to replace the flooring.

Initially, the Stordeurs tried to live in the home during the renovations and have them completed room by room. They quickly decided that wasn't going to work. "We moved in November 1 and we moved out December 1," says Andrew, with a laugh.

Last May, the couple returned to their home. The once-dated interior was now wrapped in a palette of grey and white and accented with graphic, modish wallpaper and punches of yellow and cerulean blue. "We had our checklist of things we wanted," says Allison. "We knew if we were going to do a renovation, this was it. It was just making this space exactly what we wanted."

Adds Andrew: "We had a couple rooms we wanted to invest in." The kitchen was one of them, and the couple was after something that could accommodate day-to-day family life, as well as entertaining. The other priorities were the bathrooms and ensuite.

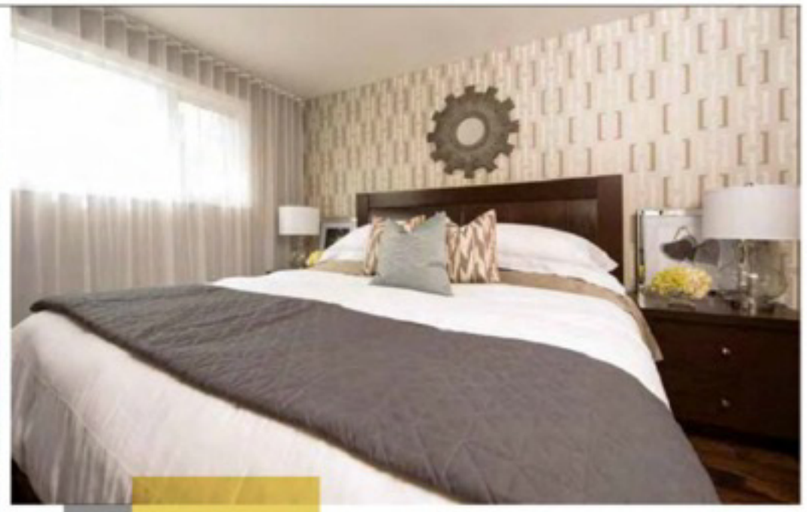
Allison says the first things Velji showed them were the white and grey-dappled quartz for the kitchen's island table, a blue-grey quartz for the countertops and a hexagon-patterned backsplash tile in myriad greys and whites. The couple loved them immediately. "The greys and whites from the start were the way he was going to go," says Allison. "The yellows came afterwards, drawn from the accent wallpaper."

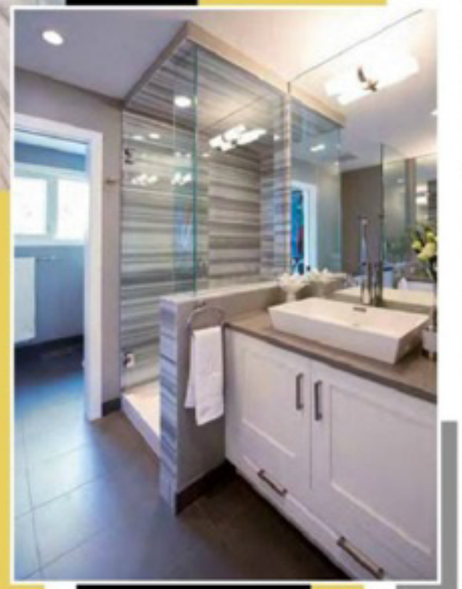
Velji agreed with removing all the walls on the entry level of the home and suggested installing an oversized table-style island, instead of an island and a dining table. The counter-height piece features traditionally styled turned legs that support a 10-foot-long by four-foot-wide counter-height slab of white quartz that comfortably seats 10. The couple says they use it for everything from food preparation and large family dinners to home-office workspace. It's even been set up as a buffet when Allison hosts her book club.

The entire island is accented with a trio of over-scale black, metal pendant lights. "When they first got in, the table wasn't here and we didn't like them," says Allison. "We thought they didn't fit." She says Velji told them to wait until the island table was installed before making any decisions, and the couple says he was right. "We

Above The Stordeurs opted for an eat-in kitchen rather than a formal dining room.

Right Simple curtain panels from Ikea were made into Roman blinds and given a custom look with the addition of grosgrain-ribbon detailing.





Above Much of the renovation budget was spent on top-end finishes like the marble used in the ensuite shower. The shower was built to a larger scale at the request of the homeowner.

Above Right and Right A palette of soothing greys and whites help to create a spa-like feel in the master bedroom and ensuite.

love them now and they are completely part of the house," says Allison.

However, the table island is open underneath, which could have meant less storage space in the kitchen. But a bank of cabinetry was built in along the home's northeast wall to accommodate extra cupboard space, as well as a built-in bar fridge and phone desk. Custom white-lacquer cabinets run all the way to the ceiling and feature simple, Shaker-style doors and crisp, modern hardware.

Opposite the kitchen sits the family's living room. Matched, tailored sofas mirror each other and flank the home's bay window looking out towards the tree-lined street. Extra seating is available in the form of two black-and-white, dhurrie-inspired upholstered stools.

"I didn't want any media upstairs; I wanted it to be media-free," says Allison of the clean, modern living space. In order to make room for a media zone, the couple reclaimed the home's attached, single front-drive garage and turned it into a family zone and mud room.

"It's just kind of the quick chill room," says Allison. "It totally changes the whole flow of the house," adds Andrew.

The couple also tackled the bathrooms upstairs and moved the laundry out and into the basement to give them more space. Andrew says finding an older home with an ensuite was difficult, so the couple overlooked its dated fittings because they thought they could work with the structure.

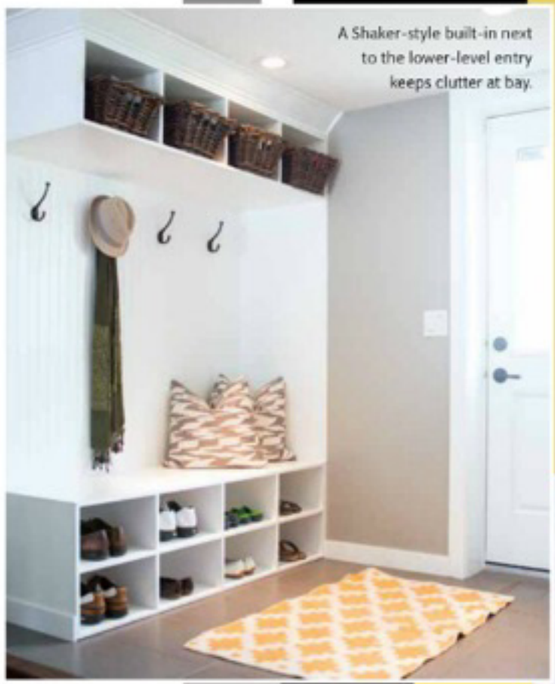
"It looked like Pepto-Bismol," jokes Allison.

Velji recommended a pass-through ensuite with a closet at the back and raised rectangular vessel sinks on opposite sides of the room. They also installed an oversized shower with striped marble tiles and a rain showerhead in the ceiling.

"Thankfully, from a renovation perspective, we didn't really have any major surprises. We didn't have any water damage. We had one sagging floor beam that we had to put a ceiling beam in," says Allison. "We kept waiting for that call."

Design-wise, the couple says there is nothing they would do differently, but they agree they would have moved out earlier and found longer-term, temporary accommodation. "We moved about five times in six months with a two year-old and a dog," says Andrew.

"This renovation, and five moves," Allison jokes. "We can get through anything."



A Shaker-style built-in next to the lower-level entry keeps clutter at bay.

Cost-Effective Design Tricks

Andrew and Allison Stordeur had to make some tough decisions to stay within their budget and tracked costs as they went. However, they admit the details were the most challenging to plan around.

> "It's the small things you don't even think about. Suddenly, you need door handles for all of your 75 cabinet doors. Those small things start to add up."
> – Allison Stordeur, homeowner

Designer Alykhan Velji suggested a number of approaches to help the couple achieve a custom look, without the matching budget.

- A set of Roman shades were created for the kitchen windows with grey window panels from Ikea that are stitched with pale-yellow ribbon as trim.
- A large expanse of wall was given instant glamour by framing a yellow trellis pattern wallpaper that inspired the room's accent colours.
- Inexpensive white porcelain subway tiles in the downstairs bath are given additional sparkle with cerulean-blue glass accents.
- Using unique pieces from mass-market retailers like Crate & Barrel and HomeSense kept the furnishing costs in check.

Simple black-and-white frames turn candid photos into an artistic display.