



LEFT: The homeowner, architect Brad Skinner and builder Merv Bell of Crown Homes of London. **BELOW LEFT:** The double-door entry (Dashwood Industries Limited) reveals a travertine tiled foyer (Bernardo Group Ltd.). The owner, inspired by the motto, “You become what you are,” stencilled the Greek words over the front door archway. **BELOW:** The summery green and white kitchen comprises one half of the space that is the family’s heart of the home. The room features lots of windows and opens to a hedged garden. **OPPOSITE:** The great room is the other half of the home’s heart, where the owners and their two young children relax, read or play games.



NEXT DOOR *neighbours*

STORY NICOLE LAIDLER
PHOTOGRAPHY JASON HARTOG

Sometimes you don’t have to go far to find your dream home. In the case of one London couple, they simply looked to the empty lot next door and used their existing house as inspiration. That Craftsman-style home, the original structure on what is now a secluded court close to the Thames River, dates from the early 20th century. “We loved the warmth of it,” the couple says, recalling their former home’s clean lines and handcrafted features, hallmarks of the popular turn-of-the-century design movement.

But with two growing children, it was becoming a bit cramped. So, they decided to sell and build from scratch next door. The result is a striking blend of old and new.

The 2,700 sq. ft., three-bedroom home, designed by **Bradley Skinner** of **Skinner & Skinner Architects Inc.** and built by **Crown Homes of London**, is as welcoming as it is functional.

With its pitched roof and stone accents, the exterior is indeed a reflection of the traditional home that inspired it, which may come as a surprise to Londoners more familiar with Skinner Architects’ ultra-contemporary designs.

“When I meet with someone, I want to know what their vision is,”

says Skinner. “These homeowners had a distinct idea about the style of house they wanted. My challenge was to make it work well on the site. Pulling it all together with some sort of proportion and beauty is the magic that I tried to add.”

Proportion, flow and attention to detail are indeed what make this house stand out. “I like everything to be aesthetically pleasing,” notes the homeowner.

“The house is designed to take your view outward,” he continues. “We wanted to bring the outside in, instead of keeping nature out.”

A Greek saying, translated as “You become what you are,” is written above the inside of the front door. “I like the message, both for the children and for adults,” the homeowner explains. It’s also a fitting reflection for a home that was clearly built as a calm retreat from the stress of modern life.

The family spends most of their time in a large, open room that serves as both a kitchen and family room. Painted a delightful shade of green (Benjamin Moore Dried Parsley), it features a cathedral ceiling and plenty of natural light thanks to windows from **Dashwood Industries Limited**.

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Highly-grained birch wood floors, used throughout the house, provide visual interest. “We had maple in the old house and found it kind of bland,” the homeowner explains. “This wood spoke to us the most, and it’s from Ontario, so it fits into the environment.”

A handcrafted stone fireplace that reaches from floor-to-ceiling provides a striking focal point. Each piece was chosen and placed by **Rick Acres** of **Acres Masonry**, and the children now enjoy asking visitors if they can find the stone that is shaped like a shoe.

The kitchen is tucked into the opposite corner. Designed by **Casey’s Creative Kitchens**, its black limestone countertop from **Progressive Countertop Systems**, white ceramic farmhouse sink, and subway-tile backsplash pay homage to an earlier era, while a large, maple-topped centre island provides plenty of work and storage space. Sleek pendulum lighting from **Living Lighting** adds a modern touch.

The kitchen opens to an intimate dining room, where there is a table built from an evergreen tree that once stood on the lot. The lumber was

kiln-dried by the homeowners, who then asked **Allen’s Furniture By Design** to craft the one-of-a-kind piece.

French doors on either side of a contemporary, double-sided fireplace from **Elmira Stove Works** lead to a sun-filled parlour where a colourful feature wall (Benjamin Moore’s Louisiana Hot Sauce) adds decorative impact and a sumptuous Stickley chair and ottoman invites relaxation. The room, a toy-free zone, is an adult retreat, where the couple enjoy reading while watching their children play in the backyard.

The home’s three bedrooms are all on the main floor. They provide an oasis of calm with their birch floors and plenty of natural light. The master bedroom, painted Benjamin Moore’s Silent Night, overlooks the gardens (still a work in progress by **Green With Envy**).

Pretty and practical, this part of the house also includes an oversize walk-in closet in the master bedroom that does double duty as a laundry room, thanks to a stacked washer and dryer. Like any busy family, these homeowners needed plenty of storage. Wanting to keep their house free from clutter, a practical mudroom with several

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With its fireplace and sumptuous Stickley chair and ottoman, the parlour was designed for the adults in the household. Fireplace wall painted Autumn Leaf (Benjamin Moore).



Plenty of natural finishes in the light-filled home connect it to the surrounding landscape, while Skinner’s clean design lines make an elegant complement to Craftsman-style features. Walls painted Natural Linen (Benjamin Moore). **OPPOSITE BOTTOM LEFT:** Rooms flow easily from one to the other and glass-paned doors (County Heritage Forest Products Ltd.) maximize natural light. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The dining table was made from the wood of a tree that once stood where the table stands now.





individual lockers (**Casey's Creative Kitchens**) was a must.

The owners' love of nature is reflected in the earth tone palette in the en suite bathroom. A tiled floor from **Centura**, granite countertops (from Progressive Countertop Systems), walk-in shower and large soaker tub provide a touch of modern luxury. **Atchison Plumbing & Heating** supplied the home's bathroom fixtures and taps.

By contrast, the children's bathroom is a place of whimsy with its colourful Hudson Bay-style striped shower tiles. There are no windows in the room, but a Solatube Daylighting System ensures natural light (**U.L. Lovett Incorporated**). Another solatube brightens the stairwell leading to a spacious loft with pitched ceiling and skylights. This space makes a charming home office and guest room.

The couple credits Crown Homes of London's interior designer, **Michelle O'Hagan**, with helping them turn their design vision into reality. "We knew what we wanted but didn't know how to get there," they say. "She made a huge difference in the choices we made."

"They wanted a cosy family home without bows and ruffles," O'Hagan comments. "It's a contemporary-rustic home. They managed to create a perfect blend." **OH**

TOP LEFT: Walls painted Honey Harbour (Benjamin Moore) and birch wood floors make a child's bedroom simple and serene. **ABOVE:** Another child's room, painted Batik (Benjamin Moore), is a whimsical play land. **LEFT:** A solatube draws natural light into the kids' bathroom where lively colours add punch to clean, white finishes.

