

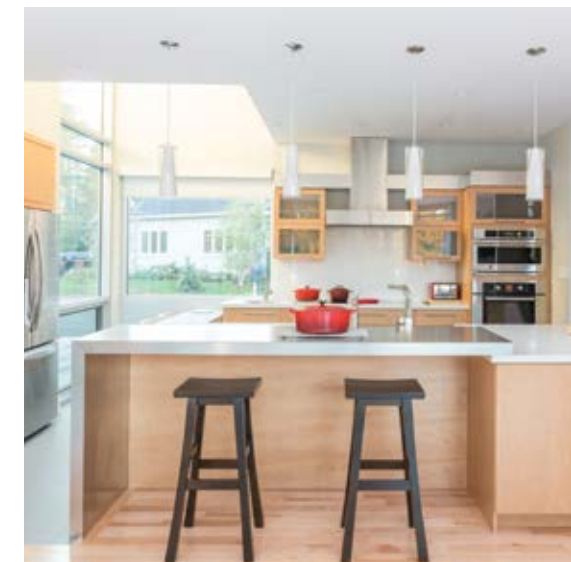
COMFY *and* CONTEMPORARY

STORY **NICOLE LAIDLER**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

Floor-to-ceiling windows connect the home's interior style with the property's natural landscape and exterior building features, such as architectural block and Galvalume siding. **TOP RIGHT:** Natural light floods the kitchen where warm wood finishes complement the metal-look laminate on the island. Functional details include a slim desk tucked into the room's windowed corner.



What do you do when one half of a married couple dreams of country life, while the other needs a quick commute?



You purchase the final lot on one of London's most private courts with views of protected green space and the Thames River. And if you share an interest in modern architecture, you hire **Bradley Skinner** of **Skinner & Skinner Architects Inc.** to design a home where you can put down roots for life.

"We drove through this development years ago and thought the houses were amazing," says the homeowner. "We realized how secluded it was, and loved the proximity to the river and bike paths."

With a growing family, the time was right to make the move from luxury rental living in downtown London to a custom-designed home that reflects the couple's personal taste and fits their busy lifestyle.

"We knew we wanted a modern home that was not in a typical subdivision," notes the homeowner. But it had to be a contemporary living space that still felt "cosy."

Built by **Crown Homes of London**, the home's sense of intimacy begins outside with a design that opens towards the back. "From the street you might not even know it's a two-storey house," comments Skinner. A striking combination of architectural block from **London Ferrell Brick and Stone** and Galvalume siding (corrugated galvanized aluminum) from **Kind Metal Roofing Ltd.** give the exterior a slightly industrial look, punctuated by a red front door.

While most traditional homes boast a spacious front hall, visitors to this 3,000 plus sq. ft. three-bedroom house enter into an uncluttered and understated foyer that invites further discovery. "I want people to come in and be intrigued by the space," says

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The home's design team L to R: Crown Homes owner Merv Bell, architect Bradley Skinner, Crown Homes design consultant Michelle O'Hagan and site supervisor Mike Van de Ven.

the homeowner, who drew inspiration from American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

In fact, this home literally opens up as one enters the living space, with ceiling heights rising from eight feet in the foyer to nine feet in the adjacent kitchen, and finally soaring to over 20 feet in the adjoining great room.

And after years of apartment living, this couple was adamant that their home have no wasted space, a place for everything, and plenty of storage. Instead of a hall closet, a combined mud room/laundry room off the

foyer is hidden from view behind a sliding Galvalume barn door.

They did not see the need for a formal dining room, so the house doesn't have one. "We didn't want it because we'd only use it twice a year," the homeowner notes.

Instead, a large open-concept kitchen and dining area provides a multi-functional hub for daily life. Wrapped in floor-to-ceiling windows by [Glass Canada Limited](#), the room provides stunning views of the backyard and is bathed in natural light – always an important consideration in any Skinner design.

The kitchen area is defined by grey porcelain tile ([Centura Tile](#)) in contrast to the natural maple hardwood ([Halls Flooring Services](#)) used throughout the rest of the home. White quartz countertops by [Coni-Marble Manufacturing Inc.](#) and a large stainless-steel coffee bar create a clean, modern look, while pendulum lighting from [Guildwood Lighting & Fireside](#) adds a slightly traditional touch.

"One of the main challenges involved with open-concept design is achieving enough opportunity for cabinetry, particularly in



Skinner advised the owners to add a strip of black stone around the fireplace, thus relieving the look of the grey block and balancing the weight of the wall-mounted TV. A window seat overlooking the garden is one of many homey details. **BELOW:** The owner ordered authentic theatre seating for the family's media room. **BOTTOM:** A lower-level gym means no excuses allowed.

the kitchen," comments Crown Homes' interior design consultant [Michelle O'Hagan](#), who worked with the couple throughout the design process.

This kitchen proves that looks can be deceiving, thanks to a cleverly concealed walk-in pantry and plenty of additional cabinetry tucked beneath the coffee bar.

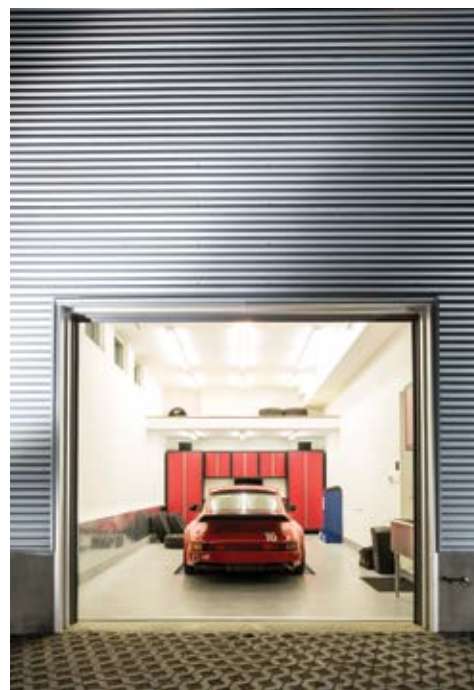
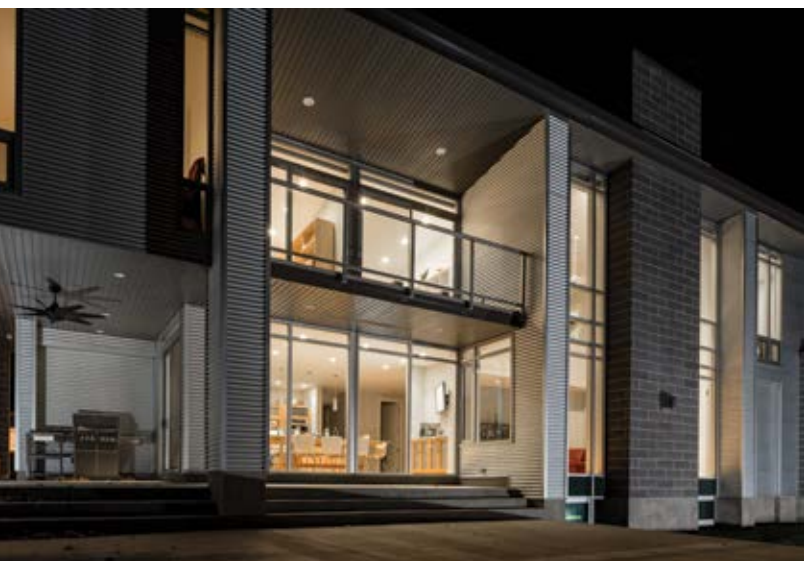
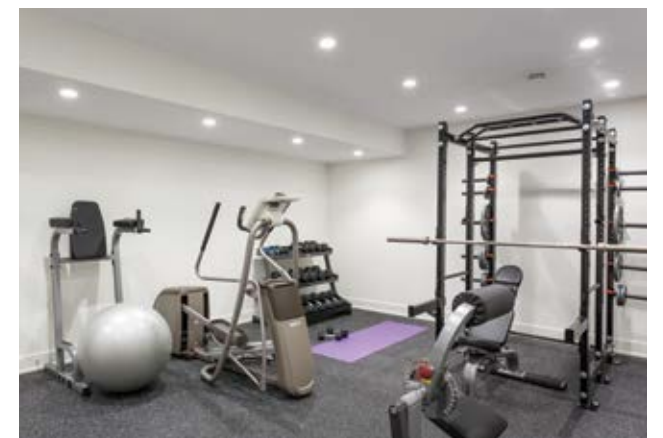
"I also wanted a corner in the kitchen where I could keep an eye on both sides of the house," the homeowner says. In order to accommodate that request, [Woody's Custom Cabinetry](#) designed a desk that overlooks the front driveway and provides unobstructed views to the backyard as well. With a built-in charging station, it's the ideal spot for this busy mother to work at her laptop while keeping an eye on the kids playing outside.

The kitchen leads into the great room, which is anchored by a feature wall built from the same architectural block used on the home's exterior. A polished, black stone fireplace surround balances the wall-mounted television, making it fade into the background when not in use.

In addition to a stunning red sectional sofa, the room also boasts a cosy window bench, upholstered by [European Upholstery](#) with the owner's own fabric, and built-in audio-visual shelving. These were two important items on the couple's wish list.

Lori Matthews from [Callidus Engineering](#) designed a zoned lighting plan with LED pot lighting ([Pro Electric Inc.](#)) that enables the couple to set the mood with the flick of a switch. "The lighting, combined with the natural textures in the home, created a very warm living space," says O'Hagan.

As a car enthusiast, the man of the house added a discreet, purpose-built garage to his wish list. Hidden from the road, the work space



TOP LEFT: A wood and Galvalume door slides effortlessly along a rail, separating the front foyer from the mudroom and garage access. **FAR LEFT:** Linear images create a tranquil aura inside and outside the home. **LEFT:** One of the owners is a car buff, so an additional garage with tool storage and hydraulic lift was high on the wish list. Instead of black top, the owners opted for a unique concrete-and-grass driveway.

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BELOW: The open-concept master bedroom reveals nature's beauty on one side and convenient en suite luxury on the other. **LEFT:** The owners brought some of their home's exterior finishes inside to add uniqueness. Note the Galvalume wall in the open-stairway landing. **MIDDLE:** The spacious master bath includes double sinks, a walk-in shower and large soaker tub. **BOTTOM:** Inspiring views of nature make working at home a pleasure.



includes a storage loft, a wall of tool cabinetry and a row of carefully-placed windows that provide natural light while preserving privacy.

Downstairs, the couple stays in shape in a workout room outfitted with equipment from **Fitness Depot** and **The Treadmill Factory**. A seven-seat media room, painted Black Iron by Benjamin Moore, features surround sound by **Homematix Systems Inc.** and offers the perfect retreat for a home movie night.

A floating wood staircase (**Roes Stair Company**) leads to the second-floor bedrooms and two home offices. With sloped ceilings that follow the home's roofline and a long narrow hallway, the upstairs living space is a fascinating mix of modern architecture and old-world charm.

The master retreat, featuring an en suite with fixtures and faucets by **Atchison Plumbing & Heating Ltd.**, is reached by crossing what the couple calls "the bridge" – a floating walkway overlooking the great room and kitchen. Two home offices connected by an exterior balcony, a child's bedroom, playroom, and bathroom, complete the second-level living space.

The entire house is painted in tranquil shades of Moonshine and Fernwood Green by Benjamin Moore. "We achieved a modern, cosy home through the use of warm tones, natural wood and restoration metal accents," says O'Hagan.

The backyard provides a welcome outdoor retreat (landscaping and hardscaping designed by **Arthur Lierman Landscape Architecture** and installed by **Crosby Landscape + Design** and **Stone In Style**), without the burden of maintaining a large lot.

A spacious covered porch wraps around the back of the house while the Lierman-designed cement terraces extend almost to the property line. "We get the benefit of all the natural space beyond our fence without having to look after it," says the homeowner.

As the final home built in this exclusive enclave, the project marks a milestone for Skinner. "I started this development in the mid-1990s with the first house, so it's almost like a time capsule of my career," says the architect. "It's nice to see it complete." **OH**

