



# BIG HOME STYLE ON A BUDGET

## 1970s Tecumseh Home Is Redesigned For Now

STORY KAREN PATON-EVANS / PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL PIETRANGELO

**IN CLOTHING, CARS** and architecture, every era produces popular fads and fashions that catch on. Homebuyers today put granite countertops and open living spaces at the top of their wish lists, while in the 1970's, people fell in love with multi-levels connected by short staircases, Mediterranean and Spanish-influenced design and L shaped living and dining areas wrapped around an enclosed kitchen.

By 2005, that L-shaped configuration had stamped so many Windsor-Essex County residential floor plans that most people would have been able to enter a strange home and navigate their way through it easily, blindfolded.

One homebuyer, however, walked through with her eyes wide open. Viewing a four-level side-split house in Tecumseh that was on the market, she was pleased to note the hacienda touches, most evident in the entrance archway and its wrought iron gate leading into a stucco and brick alcove.

While the previous owner had done away with the original 70s shag carpeting and old cabinetry, the L configuration remained firmly in place.

That had to go.

Urban Home owner and interior stylist Jodi Mason redesigned the four bedroom, ▶



Opposite page: A 1970s house in Tecumseh has been progressively remodelled since the current owner bought it in 2005. The walls of the old L configuration were removed to open the kitchen to the dining and living room areas. The support pillar is covered in travertine tile. The décor's casual chic is emphasized by the distressed wood coffee table and other rustic pieces. Left: The patio door leading off the master bedroom is given contemporary Asian flare with a four panel track window treatment that slides sideways to reveal the parkland view. Above: The living room lives up to its name with a soft as butter, caramel coloured leather sofa to lounge on.

Below: Serving as the kitchen island, a freestanding buffet is also the spot where the kids do homework while Mom cooks.

Right: Arranged into wall art in the dining room, small cubes each hold a glass votive candleholder.

Bottom right: Oversized chess pieces are among the playful accents adorning the family home



two bathroom house, from top to bottom. “We slowly updated rooms over several years,” she says. “All the renovations were done cost effectively.”

Tackling the kitchen, Jodi had most of the two walls forming the L removed. The corner support post was left in place and boxed out to create a square pillar. It became a design element, clad in travertine tile. Additional travertine was applied as the kitchen backsplash.

The 1990s golden oak kitchen cabinets were in good shape but in need of refreshing. A professional painter applied durable coats of espresso-hued paint. (He also painted the bathroom vanities for a new look). A granite-type material replaced the old countertops, helping to keep the remodel on budget.

Rather than installing fixed cabinetry for a new island, a deep buffet was ordered from Urban Home. Its antique pearl finish lightens the space, while the black granite top provides a tough surface. “That serves as a work space as well as the bar,” the homeowner says. “It’s where people sit while I’m working in the kitchen.” The family’s two children climb onto the bar stools to do their homework.

Now barrier free, visually and spacially, to the dining room, the cook can chat with guests as she readies each course. At night, the room glows with candles flickering in votive holders set into small dark cubes arranged symmetrically on one wall. Candlelight brings out the sparkle in the iron and crystal chandelier. “It’s a traditional chandelier with a contemporary feel,” Jodi says.



Chocolate leather Parsons chairs are drawn around the long wood dining table that seats 10. Slate tile squares are inset down the centre of the table, ready to receive hot dishes. Jodi chose the table for its tiles. "They provide an esthetic element as well as function."

In the living room, leather features large on the caramel vintage sofa and chair and dark brown accent chair. Texture is layered with the pearl white silky shag area rug, cream cotton toss pillows and Asian wooden chest holding the flat screen television. Old carpeting was torn up and wide plank, hand-scraped hardwood in a medium stain was laid.

A Clavinova baby grand is enjoyed by the son, daughter and family friends who favour tunes by Cold Play over classical music.

Another spot where everybody congregates is the third level family room. Jodi removed the scroll detail from the fireplace mantel and had the wood and yellow brick feature wall painted a quiet grey-cream. Heat resistant paint turned the gold toned fireplace surround a more desirable black. "It totally changes the look," Jodi finds.

New wood flooring softened by a chenille area rug also aided the family room's transformation. A big, overstuffed sofa in taupe velvet got a continental touch with linen toss pillows bearing travel stamps from Paris and London. More travel notes appear via stamped French script fabric covering a French provincial chair. ▶



Above: The legs of the former dining table were cut down to fashion a generously proportioned coffee table in the family room.

Left: DVDs, games and other items are neatly stowed in the carved hutch imported from Asia. A collection of small frames display photos of family members snapped over generations.



Honouring the homeowner's commitment to updating old things, the coffee table was upcycled. "In the last family home, it was the dining table. We cut it down," Jodi explains. Big and sturdy, the table balances well with a big carved wooden hutch from Asia. "That is a massive thing," the stylist says. "It houses all the video games and other family room necessities."

Above the hutch hangs an assortment of small frames containing photographs of the kids and several preceding generations. It's a gentle reminder of the importance of family.

With four levels for the family to sprawl over, Mom can find some privacy in her bedroom. With taupe accents, it has a serene feel. Patio doors leading to a balcony offer a view of the parkland bordering the backyard. Jodi covered the patio doors and side lights with a four panel track window treatment that slides to the side, stacking vertically. In pale taupe fabric inset with bamboo rods, "it's an alternative to the old vertical blind," she says. ▶





This page, top to bottom: The attached two car garage was converted into a gathering space with easy access to the backyard and swimming pool. Grey laminate flooring has a rustic plank look; a natural gas fireplace was added for warmth and surrounded by dark porcelain tile; friends like to congregate at the bar.






Above: To enter the house, visitors pass through the arch's wrought iron gates and into the semi-roofed courtyard; the patio furniture's red, cream and brown toss cushions punch up the soft taupe brick and stucco walls; an Indonesian side table and carved wood medallion are at home in the Spanish-style house.




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Although every room received the stylist's touch, her greatest feat was accomplished in the garage. "It was just storing junk," Jodi observes. "We took the space and reimagined it with our 3D digital design program, converting the two car garage into a gathering area and bar with access to the backyard and pool. I did it all virtually to show the homeowner the potential of what could be done."

She left the big garage door functioning so it can open to the outdoors. There is a small area for storing bikes and typical garage stuff. The rest is definitely unexpected.

One wall is covered in aged boulder stone. The remaining walls are painted either slate blue or chocolate brown. A natural gas fireplace installed as the heat source is surrounded by dark porcelain tiles with doorknob buttons at each corner to add interest. Grey laminate flooring resembling rustic planks covers the concrete and a sheepskin rug offers a little warmth underfoot.

An 8' sliding door was cut into the garage's back wall to provide more natural light and access to the pool.

Furnishings are designed for style and comfort. A down-filled vintage leather club chair is angled before a cowhide storage box that also works as an ottoman. One corner is snugly outfitted with a dark brown chenille sectional accented with cream mohair toss pillows and a faux fur throw. In place of a coffee table is a carved wooden Indonesian ottoman topped with a velvet cushion.

A big wall mirror "actually reflects the TV so when you're sitting at the bar, you can watch your program even though the TV is behind you," says Jodi.

"The crystal chandelier adds a feminine touch to this man cave," she points out. So do silver nail heads adorning the bar stools. "I designed in lots of testosterone – and then I tossed in a little bit of glam.

Which pretty well sums up the 70s. **WLM**

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