

Big Space, Small Details

A massive renovation lets a family stay on the perfect lot and turns the quiet Alberta landscape into art viewed from every room

It's the quintessential western-family dream. A quiet two-acre lot that smells of crisp mountain air, a spectacular view of the Rockies from any room and a home that sits harmoniously in the landscape — an homage to the good life.

For Jayne and Corey Ruttan, it was the landscape that originally drew them to the home. Hoping for the peaceful and calm lifestyle that comes with living on the outskirts of Calgary in Springbank, they wanted a home that had a backyard their two kids could take advantage of while keeping dramatic mountain views for themselves. The home they purchased in 2005, however, had problems.

“We thought we could move and get a spectacular view, but then we'd have nowhere to play with the kids because the lots we looked at were on a steep incline,” says Jayne. “We liked the lot we were already on enough that we figured we would stay.”

What began as a conversation over a bottle of wine with Allison Grafton and Grainger Nimmo of Rockwood Custom Homes on a possible mudroom renovation butterflied into a plan to essentially demolish the interior of the existing bungalow and add an extension.

Grafton says it was a complicated process to determine how to create a more functional space while tying in the new additions and making it beautiful.

“It was like a puzzle,” says Grafton. “We had to figure out how to do it, make it seamless and stay on budget.”

A year after the renovation began, the home was completely transformed. The square footage increased from 1,750 to 3,800 square feet on the main floor, with none of the original wiring, plumbing or interior walls remaining. The walk-out bungalow is now receptive to the family's needs and flows with their lifestyle.

When you first step into the home, the sweeping walnut beams on the ceiling in the great



Top left Seating in the kitchen is designed for entertaining, whether it is a comfortable family dinner at the table or a quick afternoon snack at the island.

Top right Custom cabinets maximize storage and make room for under-counter appliances.

Above The front entrance opens into a grand living and dining room with views of the Rockies.



The main living space contrasts light and dark as well as hard and soft with its wood and upholstery finishes.



Above left The powder room has a feminine touch with a geometric floral wallpaper and a glass vessel sink that reflects light.

Above right The television room is close to the kitchen, but can be closed off with pocket doors to create a quiet space.

room frame the magnificent view of the Rockies, and the sun shining from the east illuminates the mountain rock faces. Every angle and elevation in the home has been taken into consideration to ensure no degree of the splendour of the outdoors is hidden by a clumsy window or wall.

It's the little details that make this home special. Everything is custom and created by skilled craftsman to the highest standard. Grafton and Nimmo's team even created special wood knives and spindle moulds to ensure every piece that goes into the home is unique.

"We build heirloom homes," says Grafton. "We only do eight homes a year, so there is a high amount of detail that goes into each one."

Built-in cabinets and fireplaces in nearly every room ensure that, even if the home had no furniture in it, it would remain beautiful. Wide-plank white oak floors cover the main level and provide a rich backdrop to the decor. Off the great room on the south side of the home is the hub with the kitchen, dining, and living rooms. The large kitchen with dark cabinets sits between the other carefully created spaces for entertaining.

Thick half-walls and pocket doors separate spaces and provide designated areas for rest, relaxation, stimulation and a quiet afternoon cuddle. Next to the eat-in kitchen is a butler's pantry that hides any kitchen items from guests and provides extra storage.

The TV room just off the kitchen is a quiet place for the kids to relax. The colour is a washed turquoise, with creams and golds that play off of a blue ceiling. The palette in the whole home is one that doesn't ignore the landscape. Since there is so much scenery to see through the large windows, Grafton thought it was essential to echo the colour of the sky and western backdrop in the paint-colour choices.

"When you can achieve both a beautiful flow and functionality in the home, that's special," says Jayne. "Thought was put into every nook and cranny"



Above A sitting room at the front of the home has plush furniture with curved edges to play off the linear lines of the built-in cabinets.

Outside, a large sweeping deck has plenty of seating off the south and west sides of the home. Although the family spent last summer moving back into the home after the 12-month renovation, they are looking forward to entertaining friends and family this summer with a few burgers on a hot day.

At the far south end of the home is a special nook that is reminiscent of a sitting room one might find in a Victorian-era house. Custom glass windows outline the sun and surround a fireplace with a colourful glass mosaic tile front. Jayne's favourite spot for a cup of tea, the sun



Top left From a crushed velvet throw to the painted ceiling, the master bedroom continues the home's soothing blue colour.

Top right Eleven-year-old Meaghan's room matches sophisticated furniture passed down from her parents with whimsical pillows.

Above The master bathroom, while spacious, is also well-organized with his and her cabinets.



Making a Home Match its Environment

If you've ever seen a modern home in a country landscape, you'll understand it takes careful planning to ensure the style of the home fits with the area. Sure, we all have different styles and tastes, but it's important to acknowledge the plot on which your home sits. Here's how to blend the two.

If your home is filled with windows, ensure the indoor colour palette blends with the outdoors. Choosing colours that reflect the landscape provides cohesion and gives the space a sense of calm.

Ensure the entrance and exits between the inside and out are well defined to give a focal point and separation between the two spaces.

Effective landscaping links the home to its surroundings, which helps to prevent the home from looking like it was dropped from a helicopter randomly on the plot. Landscaping should provide pathways and designated areas for entertaining, play and nature.

pours in through the windows on every wall, allowing for the natural sunlight to graze the carefully chosen furniture.

On the north side of the main floor sits the family's private spaces. First are the kids' bedrooms, which keep the custom feel with special touches for each child. Benjamin's room is all-boy. Shades of blue fill the space and the shelving and other items in the room are sturdy so he doesn't have to worry about anything being too dear. The nine-year-old's ensuite has a cream and blue recycled-glass Vetrazzo countertop and a faucet that looks like it could have come from under a motorcycle. There is a light under the vanity that serves as both a nightlight and a well-lit path to the bathroom.

Eleven-year-old Meaghan's room is soft and sophisticated for a girl who is serious about sports. A competitive gymnast who spends 30-plus hours at the gym each week, when she's home she usually finds time to hang out with friends or practice the flute. The walls are a shade of periwinkle, and the cream bedroom set is refurbished oak furniture Corey and Jayne received as a wedding gift. Crystal fixtures and fittings give the room a hint of sparkle.

"Allison spent enough time with me and the kids that she understood the kids well," says Jayne. "She knew that Meaghan wasn't a bubble gum-pink girl. It couldn't be more perfect for her."

Across from the kids' rooms lies the master bedroom. Not an over-the-top designer show-

room, it is a calm space for relaxation and quiet time. Soft blue shades cover the walls with pieces of Canadian art popping against them. A large fireplace sits opposite the king-size bed and is cozy and romantic. The wall adjacent to the hallway is covered entirely with built-in cabinets to store and showcase the couples' treasured items.

Around the corner sits a walk-in closet, which is plenty tall enough to fit Corey's 6'3 frame. Even the handles and knobs in the closet are exquisitely chosen and echo the attention to detail showcased throughout the home.

"We have friends building an ultra-modern home and every single knob and handle in the home is the same," says Jayne. "The details are so important."



Above A bonus space to indulge wine lovers, this temperature-controlled room in the basement has glass doors so everyone can see the display of vintages.

Above right Pocket doors inset with stained glass help close off space while still letting light flow through.

Right The basement bar has everything you need for entertaining in the space that opens onto a living area and into the backyard.



Getting Lost Without the Details

In a home that is especially large, it is important that the details don't get lost. Six thousand square feet can easily turn into a looming space with a lack of character, and the winter months can make the home feel cool and uninviting. Here's how to add comfort and style to a large or small space.

- Use soft, rich textures that create warmth. Bulky fabrics also help fill large spaces.
- Replace existing mass-produced fixtures and fittings with elegant and vintage pieces. Try replacing brushed-silver bedroom knobs with crystal ones for a touch of class.
- Use natural finishes such as stone, glass and solid wood. These high-quality, high-character materials will ensure your home feels refined and well-thought-out.
- Carefully consider each piece that goes into a space whether it's art, a cushion or curtains. "A year after the build, we're still working on the details," says Allison Grafton of Rockwood Custom Homes. "It takes a while for the home owner to figure out how they live in the space and what feels right."

The master ensuite is almost entirely natural stone and is complete with in-floor heating that even warms the bench in the shower. The walk-in shower features opalescent glass tile in a herringbone pattern that reflects the light from the other spaces.

Down the hall, the mudroom that sparked the larger project leads up to Corey's office. Above the four-car garage, it has a wall of windows with mountain views, masculine shades of dark greys and browns, built-in bookcases and, of course, a beer fridge — because, according to Grafton "every man needs a man-pad."

In the centre of the home sits the solid wood

staircase. The thick wood spindles lead down to the more-relaxed lower level. To the left is a large workout area and, to the right, a bar with thick stone countertops and custom woodwork. Straight ahead is an illuminated wine room complete with Corey's favourite selections. The veined limestone floor and solid walnut shelving are rich and alluring while temperature-controlled airflow keeps bottles at their optimum. The room is a showcase for when the couple has friends over.

Kids and guests have their space downstairs as well, with a playroom and guest bedroom with ensuite. The large space is nearly the same square footage as the upstairs, but has a more

casual atmosphere for hanging out. With a wall of windows, the downstairs walkout leads out to the backyard where the family can enjoy the freedom of the outdoors.

The home is a true hideaway close to Calgary, built around a family, how they live and what they love. The result of the renovation is a peaceful, heartfelt home and the Ruttans couldn't be happier with their choice to stay and make the most out of a piece of land that truly was worth the wait.

"We remind the kids often how very fortunate they are to live in the space they have," says Jayne. "The colours are soothing, the spaces are special, comfortable and it really has a homey feel." 

Bottom left photo of basement by John Cornege, Think Orange Media.