



# Polishing a Diamond

With firm conviction and a combination of subtle and substantial improvements, the architectural vision of West Vancouver's Brad Lamoureux brought inspired grandeur to his family home

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Considering that a home is likely for most to be the single largest investment made in a lifetime, how useful it would be when viewing properties to have an architect in the family. Not only could they attest to the quality (or otherwise) of a building, but also quickly assess the potential for renovation to better suit family requirements, increasing future marketability in the process.

The family of award-winning West Vancouver architect Brad Lamoureux is fortunate in this respect. They pur-

chased a five-bedroom, five-bathroom West Van home four years ago, since when, Lamoureux's professional vision has greatly enhanced the property to add, in his estimation, over \$500,000 to its value.

The improvements ranged from subtle to substantial, the most dramatic of which increased the living space by some 660 square feet.

"The addition was quite extensive," Lamoureux explains. "We added about 330 square feet onto the main floor and the basement, allowing for



the basement to be day lighted, which it wasn't previously; it was completely buried. It also allowed for the main floor to end up as a single, large, impressive space that was more in proportion with the design of the kitchen. This created an open entertaining/living space that was more generic in nature than parceled, as before."

Even for an architect as experienced and skilled as Lamoureux, such a major building project understandably came with some challenging logistical headaches.

"There were some really tough structural items," he says. "The house was originally built to a very high standard and the main floor is what is called a suspended concrete slab. In order to enlarge it, effectively on two different sides, we had to cut away all the foundation walls and support the house at two different levels with new steel beams. It proved to be very time-consuming, difficult and expensive! We weren't really able to get machines

into the property because of the narrowness of the yard, so a lot of this was done manually, including excavation. It really was a laborious process to do this addition!"

At the rear exterior of his new house, Lamoureux amplified an already attractive and functional relaxation area by enlarging and refining it to create what is now effectively a stunning outdoor room.

"We added a large porch to the southwest side of the building that built a whole new terrace. There are two large skylights, lots of lighting and heaters, so doing this created an outdoor dining area, and an outdoor sitting area around an existing fireplace," he confirms.

"Extensive changes to the garden were also made so this, too, was a fairly substantial addition to the house. Beside it we built a lightwell, stairs and so forth, so that access to the basement can be had from the rear yard and pool area."

The Lamoureux family lived in the house throughout the updates, parceling off each area in turn during a program of aggrandizing improvements that took a full year to complete. Although such a face-lift would as a matter of course significantly boost the house's market value for whenever the family wishes to move on, Lamoureux maintains the changes were principally aimed at making "a good house even better, to bring it to the highest level it could be at, and to customize it to suit our lifestyle requirements."

In respect of the interior, modifications were made in every part of the house, but a distinct emphasis fell on the kitchen.

"Secondary to the addition were renovations throughout," Lamoureux continues. "Bathrooms were updated with millwork, plumbing and new finishes; floors were refinished; carpets were replaced – you know, all the usual renovations you'd make – but the



The elegant simplicity of this room forces the eye to note the architectural details implemented on the walls and in the stunning ceiling.

areas of particular concern were the kitchen, which was originally completely open to the front door, and the dining/living/family room, which was very 'chopped up.'

Indeed, the new subtler layout ensures there is a greater natural flow from one area to the next, with peripheries remaining defined. And the new kitchen is nothing short of spectacular. Its redesign provides a contained area with increased counter space for food preparation and casual breakfast bar dining. Lamoureux's intention of promoting the separateness of the kitchen within the open plan floor has been beautifully realized; the richness of his chosen materials accentuating the room as a focal point.

"The kitchen is in American Cherry," he beams. "We added glass tile backsplashes and additional millwork to create privacy for the kitchen from the entry. We also put in a cookbook tower and a series of colourful floating wall elements to define the entry to the kitchen, giving it that privacy it didn't previously have."

The kitchen and the rest of the house completed to his satisfaction, the dramatic Lamoureux transformation has served to add the finishing touches to this beautiful family dwelling... but that is what one can expect from the luxury of having an architect in the family. ✦

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