



GOING

upscale downtown back from the 'burbs

PROFESSIONAL COUPLE TRANSFORMS 1982-ERA RIVERBANK CONDO

BY **KARIN MELBERG SCHWIER**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **COLLIN STUMPF**
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WHEN SLADE DESROCHERS AND KIM DILLER sat down and tallied up what they spent on gas alone driving to and from work, they started house hunting. The Arbor Creek 1333-square-foot bungalow and admitted “bachelor pad” that Desrochers built in 2002 had been a good deal and set him up with financial flexibility. But as a couple Diller works downtown at Wired 96.3 Radio and Desrochers with Realty Executives Saskatoon they wanted to live in the heart of the city. Though a character home was the original plan, the condo offered everything they were looking for.

“The eight-unit Saskatchewan Crescent condominium was built in 1982,” Desrochers explains. “I’ve been in Saskatoon since 1996. I remember driving by with my mom years ago, telling her I’d live in that building some day. Kim and I are the youngest residents by a few decades.” While they waited for the Arbor Creek sale, the condo was rented (an ad on Kijiji caught the eye of a Texan engineer who needed a place for six months). The rent covered bills while the couple took time to plan a major renovation.

“When we bought the condo, we knew we’d do some extensive work on it,” Desrochers explains. “It had a 1980s feel. The kitchen was entirely closed in. It’s just under 2000 square feet but it felt smaller.”

Gutting the condo raised a few eyebrows in the building and spawned new friendships among fellow residents and neighbours.

“Some of our neighbours were instrumental in welcoming us to the building and helping with the renovation,” says Desrochers. “Even though we’ve only known these people for a short period of time, it feels like we’ve known them all our lives. Their patience and co-operation in dealing with a renovation of this size is extremely appreciated.”

The couple hired interior designer Tamara Bowman of Designer Homes by Tamara at the very beginning to guide them through the renovation process.

“We wanted to open it up. I wanted to take out all the particleboard and space cramping walls and get back to natural

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materials, to flooring that looked like old plank wood. Travertine marble in the kitchen. We went back to hemlock and fir baseboards and doors, beech cabinets.” To anyone who thinks they can take on a project this extensive and design it on their own, Slade’s cautionary words are simple: “You can’t! I can’t stress enough how much help our designer was through this process. I’m in the housing business and have been involved with lots of builds and renovations and there’s no way I would’ve come up with those ideas.” We are so happy with how Tamara incorporated our contemporary vision with her own ideas. She really gets our style.”

Getting someone’s style comes from communication, says Bowman. “My main goal is to take the time to listen and learn about the people behind the design.” Unique elements of the living space are also prime considerations. “The view in this unit is so spectacular that I knew whatever we did inside would need to highlight this feature,” Bowman adds. “Combining multiple reflective and luminous materials to allow light to bounce from one surface to the next created an extension of the windows. Although this worked extremely well with the overall contemporary feel, I was careful to mix in lots of various textures to create softness and keep this modernized space feeling intimate.”

The renovation took six months and there isn’t an inch of condo that wasn’t touched. Kijiji broadcast the invitation to salvage and Habitat for Humanity reaped the benefits of all leftovers.

Desrochers’ strongest words of advice: don’t rush a renovation. If you’re in a hurry, he says, you’ll make design and materials mistakes that you’ll regret.

“We were in the fortunate position that we could rent this and offset our bills for awhile as we took the time to plan,” he says. “There are people who buy a house to flip; they’re going to swing a hammer on it in a week and when they’re done, it will look just like everyone else’s house. It’ll be okay, but we didn’t want okay. We wanted a great environment and we have it.”





Desrochers and Diller say their lifestyle got a 180-degree turnaround, too. By thinking about what they value which didn't include all that commute time and gas expense they now enjoy the upbeat downtown lifestyle.

Desrochers says. "We use our vehicles so much less now. We can walk the riverbank and to all of our favourite spots. We really just traded homes after all the financial dust settled, but we've really improved the way we live."

Looking back on his "bachelor pad," Slade says he'll take their condo and the downtown lifestyle, hands down. With arms open to the full bank of windows overlooking the South Saskatchewan River and downtown skyline, he says, "You just can't beat the million-dollar view." ®

SLADE CONDO RENO SUPPLIER LIST

- Mechanical/Plumbing completed by Efficiency Heating & Cooling
306.384.4328
www.efficiencyheating.com
- Millwork & Finishing completed by Straitline
306.291.3915
- Cabinetry completed by APPL Custom Woodworks
306.955.8878
www.applcustom.com
- Interior Design by Designer Homes
306.341.1976
- Audio/Visual products and installation by Custom Audio Concepts
306.717.3030
www.customaudioconcepts.ca

Products used in this renovation included: Nevo Color touch remote controls with all zone Radio Frequency control, Speaker Craft Ceiling speakers, Speaker Craft MZC-64 Multi Zone audio distribution amp with Mode Color control Keypads.

- Glass work completed by SGO Designer Glass
306.477.0098
 - Painting by Leason Installations
306.865.6316
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