

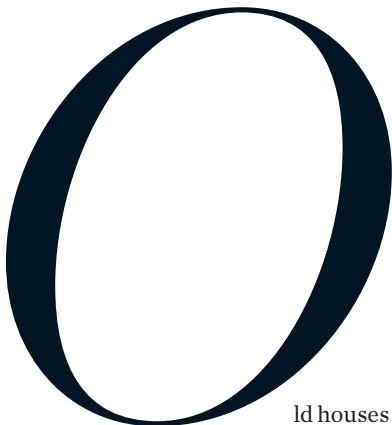
SECOND LIFE

A vintage Calgary home gets a rare fresh start.

by STACEY McLACHLAN // photographs by MARTIN TESSLER



Blast from the Past This modest rancher has been transformed into a three-storey open-concept home, but it still celebrates that mid-century character with modernist furniture and vintage-inspired touches—like a textured white brick fireplace.



Old houses don't often get a second chance in Calgary's Elbow Park neighbourhood, where teardowns of the 60-year-old-plus housing stock are the norm. So when this mid-century home went up for sale, its odds didn't look good.

But when the current owners first saw it, they spotted the potential in a 1950s rancher hiding behind a cramped layout and wood-paneled walls. A rescue mission began with gusto, with the couple knocking down interior walls before they even contacted a designer.

When they reached out to Calgary designer Alykhan Velji of Alykhan Velji Designs to figure out what to do next, they picked the right man for the job: someone who understood the importance of preserving the heritage of the space while bringing in a modern edge. "When I saw the exterior, I immediately fell in love," he laughs. "And then we were so lucky to have freedom to suggest design elements that we thought would suit the space. When you get that trust from a client and get to run with it, you can end up with something really special."

Velji sourced plenty of vintage pieces (like the beautiful teak credenza in the living room and the quirky brass-and-gold accessories that pepper the custom millwork shelves around the fireplace) to celebrate the home's design roots, and they fit perfectly alongside treasures the homeowners have collected from their travels over

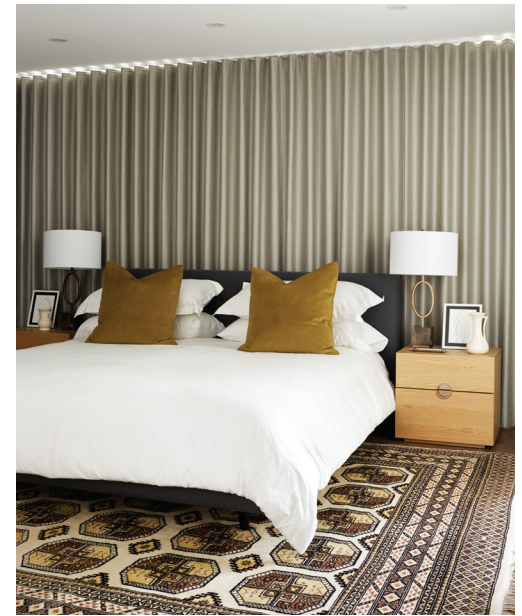


Warm It Up The intricately patterned Persian-style rug from Dasan Interiors adds a dash of warmth to the chic, modern office (top left). A sleek white dining area (above) pairs up with cozy fabrics and vintage wooden pieces (like a teak credenza) in the nearby living area. In the kitchen, a rich brown marble surrounds the window, while cheery Country Furniture stools line a pristine white counter (left).

the years. But it's not a home that's living in the past. "I like to call it 'modern mid-century,' rather than 'mid-century modern,'" says Velji.

That flip of words is telling: the contemporary design comes first in this space, with the vintage and vintage-inspired elements adding a secondary layer of character. This is no period piece—Velji has brought the space into this century. The dated wood panelling was replaced with fresh white paint and sleek, clean-lined moulding profiles, while glossy white cabinetry (you'll find it in the dining room, kitchen and bathrooms) provides elegant contrasts with the warm wood furniture pieces throughout, creating a design that's both cozy and bright. The kitchen, living room and dining room were originally segregated, but it's now an open-concept space with a family-friendly layout: the couple's twin daughters can play in the living room while Mom's in the kitchen keeping an eye on what's going on. "It's stylish and modern," says Velji, "but very multi-functional and family-oriented."

It's a perfect set-up for entertaining, too: good news, considering



Do the Slide The master bedroom (top, left and right) finds its character from a few clever sliding mechanisms: a barn-door-style entrance to the master ensuite and a wall of heavy curtains that block out awkwardly placed windows in favour of showcasing luxe linens. In the bathroom (right), a chic white-and-grey palette gives the space a spa-like feel.



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the homeowners are avid cooks and frequent party hosts. “There was a lot of emphasis on designing it appropriately, with the right appliances and a smart flow,” Velji explains. In the kitchen, a row of mustard-yellow bar stools and warm brass pendant lights draw in the eye—and guests—right away. The range and oven were installed into the island (with a minimalist hood vent above) to give the home cooks full view of the main floor while dinner prep is in full swing.

Installing a feature fireplace was important to the homeowners, and though wood, marble and travertine were all thrown around as options for cladding, the final iteration is done up in simple brick, painted white. It adds a hit of texture and a focal point to the living room, all at a relatively low cost. Staying on budget was important (you’ll find plenty of Ikea sprinkled into the design), but there are key splurges throughout the space: showpieces like wallpaper, custom

millwork and furniture. “These are the long-lasting elements,” he notes. “It makes sense to invest there.”

The staircase is a perfect example. It’s a major focal point, so doing it up right was a must; now, custom floating treads and a quirky swath of metallic Cole and Son wallpaper bring the wow factor. “We clad the side of it in glass, which helps expand and open up the space to make it feel so much bigger,” says Velji. “It lets all the natural light filter in.”

It’s not the only place in the home where wallpaper has a starring role: the twins’ room is decked out in a flamingo print that coordinates with the custom-upholstered Ikea beds. “We wanted to ensure the room exuded their personality,” says Velji. “They love pink and purple, like little girls often do.” They’re five right now, but it’s easy to see how they’ll be able to grow with the space.

In the master bedroom, a wall covered in awkwardly positioned windows resulted in an innovative solution. Moving the windows wasn’t an option, so Velji covered the whole wall with linen blackout curtains. “They add a beautiful softness and texture and help create a hotel-style vibe,” Velji explains. The curtains cover the whole wall when in use and draw up behind the bed like an oversized headboard when it’s time to let the sunshine in. The attached ensuite (airy and spa-white; the only retro tie here is the vintage-inspired brass light fixture from CB2) is accessed through a barn-style sliding door. The industrial hardware adds sculptural interest to the room, but it’s also a practical choice—a swinging door would have encroached on too much space in the master bedroom’s limited square footage.

As unique as each room feels, there are plenty of visual clues that pull the house together. “It’s about creating unity through repeating materials and finishes,” explains Velji. In the master ensuite, the high-gloss custom millwork references the kitchen cabinetry. The grasscloth paper that backs the built-in shelves in the home office is echoed in the powder room. Beautiful textured rugs—a Moroccan-inspired shag number in the living room, intricate Persian designs in the bedroom, a flat-weave kilim in the office—add an overarching sense of warmth. “There are so many mid-century, rustic and industrial touches,” says Velji. But that’s precisely what makes it work. “It’s that mix of different elements that makes a house a home.” **///**