

style file

Style and sustainability

Designer Lisa Kooistra transforms a dated 1970s home into a family-friendly, sustainable dream house with plenty of storage



by LISA KOOISTRA • photos STEPHANI BUCHMAN

The word sustainability is being talked about more frequently these days. I see the word in action as more clients request eco-friendly renovations with us.

I love that in 2023, great design and sustainability can work hand in hand. That was the case with my recent project for a young family of three. They purchased a dated 1970s-style home with hopes I could add an addition, revamp it from the inside out, create more storage space and use sustainable elements throughout the design. Read on to see how I made their reno dreams become a reality.

Colour palette ●●●

I wanted to achieve a beautiful home that would stand the test of time. So, for the overall look and feel of the

house, I chose a classic neutral colour palette of cream, brown and grey, bringing in an earthy feel. Hits of black and metallic add a beautiful contrast, while wood detailing can be found throughout the home, adding an organic touch. Pops of muted colour can be seen in smaller, less open spaces such as bathrooms, bedrooms, and the mudroom. A touch of colour in smaller rooms can add dimension and visual interest to a compact area.

Eco-elements ●●●

In keeping with their request for an eco-friendly renovation, all design decisions were created to include sustainable products. For instance, in the dining room, soapstone was used for the sideboard counter. Soapstone is impressive because it does not require sealers or toxic chemicals; it's entirely recyclable and

natural. A limestone wash was done on different design elements such as the range hood in the kitchen and living room fireplace. Limewash is non-toxic and contains zero solvents or VOCs. Engineered hardwood used throughout the home is an excellent alternative to hardwood, as it has less impact on the environment. Natural clay wall tiles were incorporated in specific rooms as well. Clay is a substance that boasts a long lifespan, has no toxic chemicals and is recyclable. When it came to sourcing the furniture, I chose local and Canadian-made items, reducing our carbon footprint and supporting our local economy. And even simple eco-updates such as paint containing no VOCs and purchasing organic bedding were included in the design. This ensured no excess off-gassing of chemicals would be in the home.



Storage ●●●

One of the biggest design asks I receive is for a home to have storage, storage and more storage. For this project, I designed a specific mudroom with floor-to-ceiling cabinetry and shelving to handle just about anything from seasonal items to toys. The addition of the bench makes this area extra practical for getting ready and out the door. I also created specific stylized storage areas throughout the house. For example, in the living room, floating wooden shelves and four jute and wood custom cabinets surround the fireplace, giving the room balance, interesting texture and plenty of extra storage to hide or display items.

It's all about creating clever design that is beautiful and functional at the same time. In the beginning design phases with our clients, we like to figure out where they need storage and why. Why is the biggest question we ask because we need to know how they use each space, so we know how to incorporate and design every inch to make it functional for the client and family.

Worth the effort ●●●

It may take some extra effort, but with the right designer and clear vision, you can transform your home into a stylish and eco-friendly environment that you can enjoy for years to come.



Tips to consider when thinking about a sustainable home renovation

- 1 **Building materials** – insulation, drywalls, paint and other adhesives that can off-gas.
- 2 **Hard surfaces** – Flooring, tiles and countertops are some of the areas to consider. For flooring, look at where and what the items are made of and their sustainable properties, while complementing the eco-friendly qualities.
- 3 **Lighting and plumbing** – Dimmers, timers, the light source, solar powered and many other factors can be considered when selecting and integrating lighting into your home. Fixtures, water-saving toilets and similar integrated systems can also help with your water bill and sustainable properties in your home.
- 4 **Soft surfaces** – Here we look at fabric choices and what they are composed of. Purchasing locally produced upholstery, drapery and furniture pieces are some of the many ways we can all help to support small businesses and bring non-VOC-emitting items into our home.



Lisa Kooistra is the creative director and principal designer for Lisa Kooistra Design. This multi-disciplinary design firm has become known for creating exceptional well curated interiors and custom builds. lkdesigns.ca IG: @lisakooistradesigns