

Homes

SURVIVING A RENOVATION

‘Enjoy the process and keep your eye on the prize’

LINDA WHITE

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For an interior designer who’s tackled several major renovations with her husband, applying the lessons she shares with clients while completing their own home renovation was key to a successful project.

“Renovations are a journey and like any meaningful transformation, there will be moments that feel overwhelming,” says Jessica Cinnamon, principal designer and founder of Toronto-based Jessica Cinnamon Design Inc.

“We all get overwhelmed at times. My best advice is to try your best to enjoy the process and keep your eye on the prize. There are many moving parts and inevitable decisions along the way, but the temporary disruption is just that: temporary. If you stay focused on the end goal and trust the plan, the result is almost always worth the wait. A thoughtfully renovated home doesn’t just change how your space looks — it changes how you live in it every day.”

Cinnamon and her husband, a stock trader with a passion for construction, renovations, and development, had been searching for their “forever home” for a long time. “Especially when we found out we were expecting our youngest, it really lit a fire under us to find the perfect space,” she says.

‘FOREVER HOME’

They found a Tudor-style home in

the South Kingsway area of Toronto, located just a 10-minute walk to the subway. Built in 1935, it was a run-down duplex with two bathrooms, two tiny kitchens and five bedrooms but Cinnamon and her husband saw its potential, completely reimagining the floor plans to create a large kitchen, five full bathrooms, one powder room, six bedrooms and a wet bar in the kids’ loft.

“We wanted a home we could truly make our own,” says the mother of two. “I wasn’t interested in a house that was already finished. We wanted to create the spaces where we would raise our family and build our life together. Over the years, we’ve invested in properties and completed six major renovations as a couple, but this one was by far the largest and most ambitious project we’ve ever taken on.”

They purchased the property in September 2023 and moved in in August 2025. The renovation entailed a full gut of the interior down to the bricks with asbestos remediation; completely new layouts on each floor; interior framing, underpinning the basement; new electrical, plumbing and HVAC; spray foaming; and new windows.

The couple ran into numerous challenges along the way. For example, they were hoping to keep the original joists but once demo was completed, they learned the joists were undersized and needed to be sister jointed or replaced, so they decided to replace them all. Also, achieving the



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The newly-renovated home features a welcoming nursery. **SUPPLIED**

floor plan they wanted required substantial structural steel work.

WORK WITHIN BUDGET

Despite the number of renovations that she and her husband had completed, Cinnamons reports this project felt different because they knew they’d be living with every decision they made for the next 15 to 20 years.

“Like many of our clients, there were countless luxuries and features we dreamed of including but we also needed to make thoughtful choices that would work for the home and our budget,” she says.



The new kitchen features a 12-foot island, rift-cut cabinets in both light and dark stains, and a built-in banquet. **SUPPLIED**

“Every element had to be practical, timeless and functional, while still reflecting our style and vision. We wanted a home that could grow with our family, accommodating changing needs over the next decade and beyond — spaces for the kids to play, for family gatherings.

“It was a balancing act between aspiration and realism, ensuring every detail would stand the test of time, both in beauty and in function. In the end, every choice reinforced the sense that this home is truly built for us, for the life we want to lead and for memories we will create for many years to come.”

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RENOVATION

Interior designer Jessica Cinnamon shares her tips for a successful renovation:

Plan before you spend. Map out your renovation before buying materials or hiring contractors. Having a clear vision prevents impulse purchases and costly mistakes.

Invest in key pieces; save on the rest. Splurge where it counts: a quality countertop, durable flooring or a statement lighting piece. Then, save on smaller finishes like cabinet hardware.

Inspect materials before installation. When tradespeople bring materials to your renovation, ensure they match what you ordered in colour, finish and quantity. Small discrepancies early on can lead to costly fixes and delays later.

Stay involved with your designer or contractor. Regular check-ins on progress are crucial. On-site check-ins a few times a week can prevent mistakes or misunderstandings from escalating.

Understand lead times and scheduling. Review with your contractor and know what trades often work on multiple projects at once. Confirm their availability and plan your renovation schedule accordingly. Delays in one trade — like plumbing — can halt progress in others, like tiling.

Communicate changes in writing and confirm any cost implications with your supplier or contractor. Doing so keeps your budget and timeline on track and avoids confusion.



Jessica Cinnamon will be speaking at the National Home Show on Saturday, March 7 at 3:15 p.m., Saturday, March 14 at 2 p.m. and Sunday, March 15 at 2 p.m. Visit www.nationalhomeshow.ca to learn more. **SUPPLIED**