

Artist homebuilder paints his 'canvas'

Innovative duplex infill first project for intermodalhome incorporated

BY KATHY MCCORMICK, CALGARY HERALD DECEMBER 11, 2010



David Schleindl and wife Kathy Aldous-Schleindl of intermodalhome incorporated in the kitchen of the infill duplex they built in inner-city Parkdale.

Photograph by: Ted Rhodes, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

David Schleindl approaches design as an experience. That's why his first homes, as a builder, are so unique.

Although it's a duplex infill in the heart of the northwest inner-city community of Parkdale, the two homes are each totally different both inside and out -- yet the cohesive nature of the design works from the street.

"The unusual triangular shape of the lot was the first challenge," says Schleindl, owner of intermodalhome incorporated. "There were many constraints from the city perspective, but I could do a duplex."

But to make it work, the builder made the whole look like one grand mansion.

"The two sides are quite different in layout and plans, but they look like one building from the exterior," says Schleindl.

"My inspiration was homes in London, where three or four units together look like one building. I had to break up the volume with materials and colour, but they had to be unified."

He accomplishes that through extensive use of brick with stone accents, along with different shades of tan and grey acrylic stucco.

Inside, the homes are totally different, with one side a traditional design with modern twists, while the other is open and contemporary.

With his background in fine arts, film, video and architecture, Schleindl likens the designing of a home to a painting on a canvas.

"Once a plan is in place, then it's the detail, like getting the palette right," he says.

It is every tiny detail that makes the homes in the duplex both work so well, individualizing the themes to fit each family.

The traditional design, which is decorated, is what Schleindl calls the "schoolhouse" or Portland model.

The inspiration "gives a nod to early 20th century North America," he says.

Yet its contemporary design elements work for today's active family -- and all integrate to create a warm, rich interior, with both past and present melding together nicely.

The high breakfast bar in the galley-style kitchen, for example, is made for families on the go, where they can have quick meals at the ready.

The countertops are today's latest Caesarstone quartz in a soft white, with the appliances consisting of the latest stainless-steel models.

Yet above the breakfast bar, there are pendant lights of recycled, hand-painted glass with a retro look. They're from Schoolhouse Electric in Portland, Ore.

"The light fixtures just feel right," he says.

The kitchen hardware, again, consists of replicated hand pulls for drawers. A rectangular grate above the pantry door has a decorative pattern reminiscent of old-style furnace vents.

"It is a few small things that harken back to the period," he says.

"For me, it's about the story. A home should have personal things -- not just a checklist of things like granite counters, hardwood floors, pantry closets and so on just because everyone else has them."

The home's design, too, is reminiscent of the vintage homes of yesteryear.

Separate rooms with separate functions are everywhere. The design is not open, yet the home does flow and appears even larger than its 2,515 square feet.

From the entrance, it opens to the staircase ahead, where old and new mix well.

The staircase railing is anchored by a newel post -- reclaimed from a 1910 house -- yet underneath the railing, glass panels open up the space visually right up to the third floor loft area.

"The front entrance is where it all begins, so it's important to have a pivotal point like the newel post, says Schleindl.

"The glass partitions allow spatial flow between the main floor and two open loft spaces on the second and third floors. The ceiling on the third floor is green, matching a green wall at the entrance - the first floor pivotal space -- so it connects the spaces and the colour pulls the eye up."

The fact that the infill has three storeys plus basement development is, in itself, unusual, he says. And it should be highlighted.

"It's a conscious decision I've made to let the volume speak for itself," says Schleindl.

But again, the home has modern touches to make it fit today's families.

"I've taken a more contemporary take on the home's design," says Schleindl. "I don't want a gingerbread house."

An example is found in the master ensuite, where the extra-long soaker tub has water coming down in a spout from the ceiling.

Step next door and you're into a thoroughly modern home that's more like a sophisticated urban plan or an upscale hotel in Las Vegas.

Called the Red Rock, it is 2,288 square feet -- a bit smaller, but much more open and with a larger lot, albeit in a different shape than the norm.

"It's conceptually wider open, with clean lines and a clean colour palette and contemporary materials - a house that's more for entertaining," says Schleindl.

The majority of the walls are white, the baseboards and trim are flat and plain.

"It's more about providing a canvas for what people put inside," he says.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PROJECT: Duplex infill. The east side of the duplex is the Portland, which has 2,515 square feet on the main floor and 1,034 square feet in the basement (plus an additional 258 square feet of under-slab basement storage). The west side, the Red Rock, has 2,288 square feet on the main floor and

1,011 in the basement (with 280 square feet under-slab basement storage). BUILDER: intermodalhome incorporated.

PRICE: The Red Rock contemporary home is listed at \$989,000. The Portland is \$939,000.

LOCATION: 2830 and 2832 1 Ave. N.W. in Parkdale in the inner city INFORMATION: Check with realtor John Linster of Re/ Max Real Estate (Central) at 403-620-2222, or visit www.intermodalhome.com

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