



Daniel Twig at Lord Twig Design has a few ideas for new parents who are planning the perfect nursery.

Getting ready for baby

By Maggie Calloway

The temptation, especially for your first child, is to go over the top a bit decorating the baby nursery. What you need to stop and think through is that your new bundle of joy grows at an alarming rate and the nursery decorated for a newborn quickly becomes inappropriate for the toddler and beyond.

“ more page.26

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This Vancouver heritage home was given a full-on renovation by Todd Senft at reVISION Custom Home Renovations, in partnership with Lighthouse Sustainability. Lighthouse was contracted by the city of Vancouver to do an audit of everything that was removed from the house that was recycled.

Martin Knowles photo

Time to call in the closet experts

By Maggie Calloway

You have made the difficult decisions about what clothes to keep and what to toss or donate. You have ruthlessly gone through all your drawers and cupboards, including the dreaded ‘I don’t know where to put it so I’ll just stick it in the catch-all drawer until later’ drawer. We all have one of those; I could probably build a summer house including electrical and plumbing out of mine! You have resisted the temptation to keep things ‘just in case’ and passed it on to someone who could really use it, and now comes the reward.

Could this be the time to call in the experts, to create custom storage solutions unique to your needs? To finally get rid of those sagging rails and shoe jumble at the bottom of your closet?

Chris Isfeld, along with his brother Brett, are partners in the custom closet design company Designer Closet Guys. Isfeld, an engineer by training, came to B.C. after graduating to work for a plastic company who, among other things, made shelving products. In 2000 the general manager of the company and Isfeld decided to venture out on their own to start a company manufacturing

“ more page.31

Vancouver heritage home gets a facelift

reVISION Custom Home Renovations goes to work in an old house with character.

By Maggie Calloway

This was a full-on renovation by Todd Senft of reVISION Custom Home Renovations. A new top story was added, then the whole house including the bottom suite was renovated down to the studs and beyond.

“This is a heritage, character home on the east side of Vancouver. The project was very unique in that two intertwined projects were happening

at the same time,” Senft says. “My company was contracted to do the renovation and at the same time Lighthouse Sustainability was contracted by Metro Vancouver to do an audit of everything that came out of the house that was recycled or repurposed. Because this was a significant renovation it was a prime project for them to look at everything during deconstruct, which is a term they use instead of demolition. In real terms for us it meant everything being removed from the home must be dismantled in a way they could more easily recycle rather than just crushing them and throwing them into a bin.”

Lighthouse conducted a pilot project on this renovation to document real-world experiences

and challenges in recycling and re-purposing every possible item removed from the home.

The roofing shingles were separated; the roof sheathing, drywall, insulation and flooring were also separated. Doors and windows were carefully removed for recycling and every single item was weighed for comparison purposes.

This was an exciting project because while it is a noble endeavor to talk about diverting building materials from the landfill there was, and is, a need to get hard facts on what it takes and what is possible.

It takes a lot longer to remove items with care,

“ more page.26



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All the conveniences of a new home in your comfortable, familiar house

“from page.25

separate everything and arrange for various businesses to remove them. Taking longer means more expense to both the renovator and subsequently to the homeowner but because the landfill charges by tonnage, savings are realized at that end of the process. It is impossible to make long-term policy decisions without hard data and this project helped move that data forward.

And what about the renovation itself? The family, including two kids and the downstairs tenant, moved out for the seven months of the renovation.

The only things saved from the original home were the kitchen cupboards and countertops, as the homeowners had recently renovated the kitchen.

“With the new top story, consisting of two bedrooms, one bath and a roof deck, the original foundation would not carry the load so we had to raise and support the house while we removed the old foundation, pour a new one and put in new drainage around the house,” Senft says. “On the main floor we took out the original brick chimney to create an open space between the dining room, living room and kitchen. Open-plan living on this floor made great sense for the family. There is also a bathroom and one bedroom on this floor. Then we created a staircase by the entry to go up to the new top floor. The basement floor had an original rental suite which was also totally renovated and remains a separate suite.”

The renovated house is completely energy-efficient. The family plans to stay in the home for the long term so it made perfect sense to spend the extra money up front to purchase top-of-the-line mechanical systems with high energy-efficiency.

This is a decision anyone planning a major

renovation should keep in mind. It takes an average of five years to gain a return on the investment but the average turnover in housing in British Columbia is also five years. Consequently if you sell, it's the new owner who gets the advantage of your investment.

“This is a character home, which still fits perfectly in the neighbourhood, with a completely new heating system, new hot water system and insulation, the windows were upgraded, all the energy efficiencies you could ask for, all the conveniences of a new home,” Senft says.

There is no question that an undertaking of this magnitude is hard on any family.

First they are displaced, which is hard especially with children. There are the multitude of daily decisions to be made, and not to be dismissed is the financial commitment.

Anyone contemplating a comparable renovation should first surround themselves with an experienced contractor and designer or architect, make as many upfront decisions as possible and, when the going gets stressful (and it probably will), keep your eye on the prize.

Short term inconvenience for a long-term gain for your family is a worthy goal, especially when the end result is as amazing as this home became.



The newly re-built home was designed with an aim towards being open-plan, and included a roof deck, left, plenty of floor space on the main floor, bottom left, and a beautiful bathroom renovation, below.

Martin Knowles photos



Nursery really for parents

“from page.25

The trick is for the room to be flexible enough to grow along with the child.

Daniel Twig of Lord Twig Design is an expert at pulling together a fabulous baby nursery which will still, with a few adjustments, change as your child grows.

“When I am invited by a client to design a new nursery I really pay attention to what the rest of the home looks like,” Twig says. “Even though this room is for a child, you wouldn't design a traditional nursery in a very contemporary home or vice versa; you need a flow. My target is always to create a room which will help make the baby secure, content and stimulated.”

Twig agrees that it's best to create a room that is only for a newborn.

“You can spend an awful lot of money on furniture which is only functional for a very short time,” he says.

“The main pieces in the room, the chest of drawers, the comfortable chair, etc. should be of good quality but

not age-specific, which will last for years ... The room can be made age-appropriate by wallpaper or decals, curtains and cushions; things that are easily changed and not expensive. This way the room has longevity.”

Twig understands that when a room is being designed for an anticipated baby, it is really for the parents. The baby doesn't get anything from it because they just want love and food. Because of this, he spends a lot of time making the room a practical space for the parents and a soothing, calming and relaxing place for the new child. If the mom is relaxed, the baby will be happy.

After the crib, the most important piece of furniture in the room is an appropriate chair for mom. When you have to feed a baby every few hours you need a comfortable, supportive chair, especially at three in the morning. Even an eight-pound baby becomes heavy and exhausting!

The great thing is Lord Twig Design is very knowledgeable about what makes a great nursery both for the baby and the parents. Good to know there is one less thing to stress about.



Daniel Twig at Lord Twig Designs says that it's very important to have a practical space that will also be soothing for the parents and the baby.

Submitted photos

Sales Director: Lisa Farquharson • 604-575-5364 • lisaf@bcclassified.com
 Editor: Kerry Vital 604-575-5346 • editor@newlocalhome.com
 Writer: Maggie Calloway maggiec@blackpress.ca
 Online Advertising • Black Press National Sales • 604-575-5826
 Contributing photographers • Martin Knowles, www.mkphotomedia.com; Rob Newell, www.robnewellphotography.ca
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