



Design experts reveal
the latest trends in
outdoor living

home

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The Smart Remodel



WITH TWO PREVIOUS HOME remodels under their belts, Karen Boriss and husband Alex Holmes took on the renovation white whale: a complete teardown and rebuild. Using design inspiration from Boriss's Scandinavian roots, the couple crafted a family-friendly dream home in Vancouver's Cambie Village ►

by *Kristen Hilderman*

PHOTOGRAPHY by *Janis Nicolay*



After renovating and selling two homes, designing and building the perfect nest for a growing family was a natural next step for Karen Boriss and Alex Holmes. "We loved renovating old homes, but you're restricted in what you can do," says Boriss. "We were really excited for the opportunity to start from scratch."

The couple purchased a lot in Vancouver's Cambie Village neighbourhood and tore down the existing home, but did so in a way that no other Vancouverite had done before them. Rather than perform a typical home demolition, Boriss acquired a deconstruction permit – the first-ever in Vancouver – which is an environmentally friendly alternative to demolition that diverts more than 75 per cent of the materials from the landfill. "You basically take down the house by hand," says Boriss.

From day one, the couple worked closely with architects Paul Phillips and Ryan Hultman of EDG Homes Inc., and with builder Peter Pahal of Mercia Construction. Throughout the process, Boriss consulted with Geele Soroka of Sublime Interior Design, bouncing around ideas to achieve the "eclectic, Scandinavian modern" esthetic she was after. "A lot of the furnishings are inspired from what I was exposed to growing up," says Boriss. "There's a bit of mid-century modern – my grandfather was an architect in the '50s and '60s. Some of the pieces are from my grandma's house."

The end result is a clean design that's meant to be lived in, not just looked at.

"One of the key ideas with the house was to make it very family-friendly and very informal, so that nothing is precious"

***–Karen Boriss,
homeowner***



The Dining Room

SIMPLICITY RULES

To keep the dining room simple and functional, Boriss used a sturdy heritage piece as the focal point. "The dining room table – the big farmhouse table – came from the farm that I grew up on in Ontario," she says. The capiz-shell pendant was a treasure she brought back from "a big lighting adventure down to Seattle" as an irreverent statement piece for the simplified space.

TIP

Leftover fabrics make for easy slipcover sewing projects and playful accents



The Living Room

FUNCTION FIRST

"When we designed the house, we purposely didn't put in a formal living room," says Boriss. She chose a dark, "easily wipeable" couch with clean lines by EQ3 that could withstand two growing kids and plenty of seating for the house's most-lived-in room.



The Kitchen

CLEAN CONCEPT

The most important lesson from Boriss's previous renos is that every island needs ample seating. To keep the kitchen's airy feeling, she avoided too many upper cabinets, which can overwhelm the space, and added warm wood shelves to unite the esthetic with the rest of the home.



THE BORISS FAMILY

(Above) When Karen Boriss and Alex Holmes were building a custom home in Vancouver's Cambie neighbourhood for their growing family, they valued approachable functionality above all else.

The Master Bedroom

LET'S GET COSY

"In comparison to other new builds, we opted not to have really large bedrooms," says Boriss. "The way we live, we don't really spend a lot of time in the bedrooms." To capitalize on the small space – while still fitting in a king-sized bed – Boriss installed a floating shelf and wall-mounted task lamp that acts as a mini spotlight, letting her read while her husband snoozes. She tied together the neutral palette with a dark grey, found in the handmade wallpaper from Portland, pin-tuck pillows and dramatic lighting.

TIP

A single bed can go all the way from preschool to university age



The Kids' Rooms

ROOM FOR GROWTH

"Design wise, it was hard, because I didn't want to be too juvenile," says Boriss, "but I also wanted to have a bit of fun, because they are still kids." Using neutral walls, floors and lighting gave Boriss the freedom to be adventurous with accents, which can be easily (and cheaply) switched out as kids mature.



IDEA

Reclaimed wood from a heritage building Holmes's father re-developed was used to make a charming step stool

The Bathrooms

SO FRESH AND SO CLEAN

Both bathrooms started from the same neutral palette, but for the adults, Boriss wanted to add some bling, with reflective mirror frames and jewelled hardware. Plenty of storage space keeps the countertops uncluttered. The consulting designer found bubble tiles for the kids' bath and shower, but Boriss loved the playful pattern so much that she decided to use it for the whole floor.



The Garden

Landscape designer Dave Demers of Cyan Horticulture created a modern and stimulating exterior space. "More than kid-friendly, [Karen] wanted it to be *for* the kids," says Demers. The space marries design with play at every turn, including a perfectly manicured front lawn that is actually a soccer pitch and a gardening space with a kids' sandbox.



SEASONAL BLOOMS

Hydrangeas are a great pick for Vancouver's mild summers and the early fall. For adding interest to the spring garden, Demers favours *Edgeworthia chrysanthia 'Gold Rush'* (golden paperbush), *Podophyllum 'Spotty Dotty'* (Chinese podophyllum) and *Corneus Starlight* (hybrid flowering dogwood).

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STRUCTURAL UPGRADE

"We had a bit of a grade change to deal with in the back. Instead of just sloping it up," says Demers, "we decided to put up the retaining wall." The low-lying cement wall brings structure, framing the sandbox, which is softened by a weeping willow, and holds in the herb and vegetable gardens.