



An eclectic mix of furnishings and accessories infuse contemporary energy into a traditional-detailed renovation.



Upstairs Downstairs

design by ECKSTEIN DESIGN
photography RACHAEL KING JOHNSON

A new lower-level development delivers high-end details



Left: A blonde wood dresser from Restoration Hardware was one of the first purchases for the space. The graceful lines compliment the linear panelling throughout the space.

Below Left: A cut-crystal fixture provides glamour and throws beautiful patterns across the ceiling of the family room.

Right: A large bar area is fully equipped for parties with friends or quiet family movie nights.

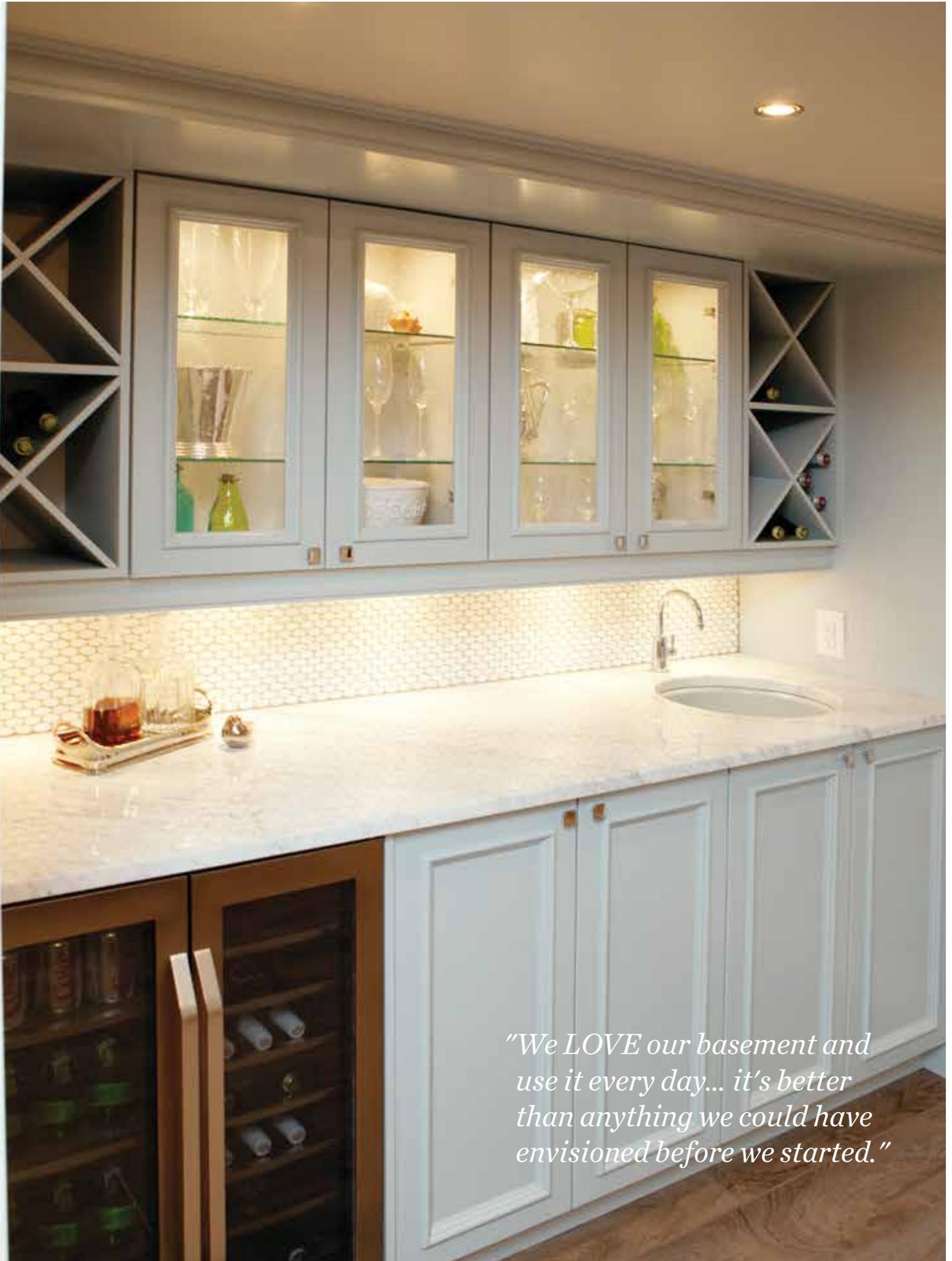


When homeowners Meghan and Danny Wright purchased their River Park South home four years ago, the newly built house included a series of attractive upgrades that had been specified during its construction. While the style and decor of the home definitely suited the couple's taste, and the house had not previously been lived in, it was still not quite the same as having something custom designed. It wasn't until they undertook the development of the unfinished basement that they were able to put their own personal stamp on their home's design. Says Meghan, "We were excited to create a space that not only looked amazing but that also had all of the design and functionality we needed. It gave us the ability to make the space unique and truly ours."

Working with interior designer Tamara Eckstein, of Eckstein Design

Group, the couple began to conceive a multifunctioning lower level space. The plans included a large family room, a designated playroom for their young children, a future guest bedroom and washroom, as well as a large utility room and ample storage areas throughout.

From the very first meeting, the clients were clear about their expectations for the design. "They have a very distinct look that appeals to them; I'd call it modern traditional," says Eckstein. The homeowners clearly expected that style, as well as the quality of finishes, to flow down to the new space. "All of the finishes - the furniture, cabinetry, tile work - were to be of the same or better quality as anything in the rest of the house. The only difference between the new space and the rest of the house is that it happens to be located below grade."



"We LOVE our basement and use it every day... it's better than anything we could have envisioned before we started."



The standard of quality, and the considered design plan, is evident as soon as you come down the stairs to a landing as graceful as any front foyer. A cut crystal ceiling fixture and an overscale blond wood dresser from Restoration Hardware work with substantial panelled columns to create a heritage feeling that flows throughout the space. Turning left into the large family room, guests are greeted by a bar noteworthy not only for its size but also for its surfaces; the custom millwork includes display cabinets fronted with seeded glass, built-ins for wine storage and a double glass-doored stainless steel undercounter bar fridge. The Venatino marble slab countertop includes a round undermounted cast-iron Kohler sink that was customized to match the colour of the robin's egg blue cabinetry. Oval penny tiles in Carrara marble cover the backsplash.



The same cabinetry is featured on the opposite of the family room in the entertainment area. Flanking the fireplace and television, these built-ins provide both concealed storage for audio-visual and gaming equipment as well as provide lighted display space for family mementos. The sofas were relocated to the new space from elsewhere in the home; the modern wing chair, industrial-style coffee table and shag area rug all provide textural accents that contribute a fresh counterpoint to more traditional pieces like the black campaign and white pedestal side tables. Eckstein notes that the room's furnishings were carefully sourced over the entire span of the project, in order to give the space an organic, cultivated-over-time feeling. Throughout the space, a laminated floor

of 6" wide weathered planks, as well as an extensive lighting plan providing distinct general, task and ambient light adds to the patinated atmosphere of the entire project.

Adjacent to the family room is the children's playroom. The curtained doorway between the spaces is a favourite design feature of both the designer and the homeowner. The double-sided curtains feature coordinating fabrics: a playful chevron print on the playroom side, and more traditional paisley facing into the family room. Flanked by additional panelled columns, the oversize doorway doubles as a stage from which the kids can give performances to an audience in the family room.

Guests who've not yet forgotten that they're below ground will as soon as they enter the private area of the lower level, which includes a flex space and a 3-piece washroom featuring finishes worthy of any master ensuite. Bathed in Carrara marble and tile, the washroom cleverly plays with rounded and straight lines. Dramatic arches echo the seductive curves found in the sconce-like pendant fixtures, wall tiles and exposed steel of the vanity base. Rectangular and square cuts of marble cover the floor and ceiling of the shower. The large mirror above the vanity is a contemporary nod to a more traditional Venetian mirror, which would look equally at home in this luxe space. Located adjacent to a space currently used as a home gym, the washroom will eventually serve as a guest bath when the area is repurposed as a guest suite.

The collaborative effort of everyone involved in the project - homeowners, designer and tradespeople - produced the hoped-for results: a high quality build that meets all of the homeowners'



In the family room, a porcelain tile fireplace surround in a classic basket weave adds texture and quiet elegance.

Right: Large built-in cabinetry hides clutter and provides display space for family treasures.



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needs, and even exceeds their design expectations. "From the 'perfect shade of blue' cabinets to the pattern cast on the ceiling from the crystal light fixtures, I love all details of the design. It personally makes me happy every time I go downstairs." ❧



Ceiling pendants hung at sconce-level light the vanity; luxurious Carrara marble covers the floor, vanity and shower stall.

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1. Premier Prints Zig Zag Village, Blue/Natural
2. Premier Prints Suzani Twill, Powder Blue
3. Julian Tile Bathroom Shower Walls: Tonic Series 'White Flower'
4. Ames Tile Bathroom Floor: Honed 12x24 Carrara tile

5. Flooring: Balterio Tradition Sapphire - Friesen Floor & Decor
6. Benjamin Moore HC-173 Edgecomb Gray
7. Benjamin Moore HC-171 Wickham Gray
8. Benjamin Moore CC-40 Cloud White