

# REAL ESTATE

FEELS LIKE HOME

## A home with a past ... and a future

Gord Shields transformed his parents' dream home into the dream home of his young family

CAROLA VYHNAK  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The birch tree that used to be in front of his sister Laura's window is now outside his own kids' window. And his mom's garden beside the driveway "is still exactly the same as she left it," says Gord Shields, whose mother, Marlene, died five years ago.

His new family home is built on the same place where he grew up.

His wife, designer Amanda Shields, created their custom dream home in Newmarket, choosing every material, finish and feature, from bricks and shingles to paint and hardware.

Although she ran ideas by her husband, "he said I had free rein on the house, as long as he had a little music room downstairs."

The 3,000-square-foot, three-bedroom residence the family of four moved into a year ago is a bright, flowing space, made in her signature style, which she defines as "a very clean, modern esthetic (that's) still inviting."

Gord's childhood home, built in the 1960s, was bought in the mid-'80s by his late parents, who never renovated it.

Gord and Amanda gutted the two-storey house and ripped out everything "from the dangerously outdated electrical to the basement's green shag carpet." Amanda adds that it was too closed-off and had bedrooms that were too small.

Her goal was to infuse their living space with "warmth and comfort," using natural materials, white oak flooring and cabinetry, and white walls, anchored with "a few hits of black," which, she says, makes a room feel complete.

The showstopper kitchen, with its full wall of cabinetry, porcelain slab backsplash in an Arabescato pattern, and oversized island featuring a base of black fluted material, exemplifies the seamless, yet striking look she prefers.

In the living room, black-framed, full-height windows and a soaring 16-foot ceiling bring the trees and nature inside, while two big sliding glass doors in the kitchen and dining area provide access to the outdoors.

The living room has become the favourite spot for the couple and their daughters, Phoebe, five, and Estelle, seven, to hang out as a family, relaxing or watching movies.

"I just love it," Shields says, noting they've now had front-row seats to all four seasons unfolding in their backyard.

Throughout the main floor, a palette of black, light-coloured wood and muted earth tones is paired with leather and organic elements, evocative of a Scandi/mid-century style.

Upstairs, the main bedroom built over the garage is designed to be a light, bright and relaxing space, with big windows and a vaulted, beamed ceiling.

The transformation from one generation's dream home to the next generation's took two years from architectural drawings to completion, according to the designer and founder of Newmarket-based Amanda Shields Interiors.

"Because Gord grew up here, it feels even more sentimental," she adds.

"It sometimes feels surreal to be back in the neighbourhood where I grew up," Gord says.

He harbours a special memory of the house when all the youngsters of a similar age on the street would play hide-and-seek together every day after school.

"I think that there were 27 kids total."

The property has changed little over the decades, he adds.

"The shape of the backyard has not changed at all."

All the mature trees are still standing for his own family to enjoy.



Amanda and Gord Shields, and their daughters, Phoebe, five, and Estelle, seven.

HANNAH SEVER  
PHOTOGRAPHY

“It sometimes feels surreal to be back in the neighbourhood where I grew up.”

GORD SHIELDS'S  
HOMEOWNER



Built-in bookcases, with arches to soften the lines, flank the fireplace at one end of the living room, where a 16-foot ceiling, big windows and white decor make the space bright and light.

MIKE CHAJECKI



A soak in the deep tub in the main bedroom's ensuite comes with a tranquil vista of tall evergreens.



The light wood tones of white oak cabinetry in the kitchen add warmth to the white and grey porcelain backsplash.