

# BUILDING *family*

STORY HEATHER WRIGHT  
PHOTOGRAPHY JUSTIN VAN LEEUWEN



A family in the same business. Cory and Jordan Bauer-Croteau, Christiane Bauer and Paul Croteau.



To create a smoothly-run household, it is not unusual for a family to allocate tasks to spread the workload. With their current venture in Manor Park, from concept to creation to completion, the Croteau/Bauer clan redefines the whole concept of family household chores.

Each member of this housing-minded family brings a unique skill-set to the enterprise. Collectively they have years of experience in working with and redefining spaces. **Paul Croteau** is a builder, **PMC Ottawa Ltd**; **Christiane Bauer** is a realtor (and the former Director of Official Residences with the NCC) at **Keller Williams Ottawa Realty**. Their sons **Cory** and **Jordan Bauer-Croteau** have followed in their parents' footsteps to pursue business in and around housing,

with Cory as a realtor alongside his mother and Jordan as a mortgage broker at **Mortgage Brokers Ottawa**. A third son, **Mackenzie**, is studying architectural technology and is waiting in the wings to join the business.

Perched on the 22nd floor, this suave two bedroom, completely renovated condominium is the result of their latest collaborative business effort. Last summer, the family identified this investment opportunity, and got to work with plans to renovate and sell the suite.

Each member of the family plays a part. Jordan arranges the capital and the financing; Cory specializes in sourcing and acquiring the properties; Paul does the construction, and Christiane suggests and incorporates the design elements. *Continued on page 40*



The dining area has large glass doors that overlook the protected green space.



**ABOVE:** The small area was opened up to create an open living space. **BELOW:** The balcony offers a relaxing outdoor space. **BELOW RIGHT:** Unique touches add to the sophisticated modern feel of the home. **OPPOSITE:** The kitchen was transformed into a chic entertaining and cooking space with the island being a "key" element.

Cory explains the relationship: "Jordan and I identify the opportunities and my parents lead the process to fruition."

The challenge in a small space, of course, is the physical limitation of the space itself. But, this condo seems to challenge the concept of size associated with square footage. With a well-distributed space plan, clever colour neutrality, sweeping city vistas and an acute attention to detail, each inch serves a purpose and combines to support flow and polish in the context of more pragmatic use.

When doing an extensive renovation, one of the most pressing questions is where to start. According to Christiane, the first step was at the galley kitchen and in the entry way where a protruding wardrobe closet blocked the view.

"That was the first thing that we really needed to address, to take the walls down and make it open and really capitalize on that view," she says.

And according to Paul, how they reconfigured the space is also remarkable because it emphasizes the fact that you really can change a space to suit your needs, even if on the surface it may appear otherwise. "When people think about a condo (vs. a freehold home), they think that they can't really change things and they don't fully appreciate that you actually can."

The end result is an open-concept space that feels and looks roomy, airy and elegant. One is aware of walls, but doesn't feel contained, because of the placement of

well-thought out design elements. The layout is intuitive for both entertaining and for daily life, and wide sliding doors to the balcony channel the light and breeze through an open-concept living area.

In the kitchen, says Christiane, "the island (**Creative Marble & Granite**) was key and is the anchor in the space. It's huge. We deliberately didn't put a sink in it or a cooktop; we wanted to keep it clean and versatile in how people wanted to use it."

Bright backsplash by **Euro Tile & Stone**, is set next to quartz countertops (**Creative Marble & Granite**) that wind around the ample kitchen, and offer a nice colour contrast to dark, shaker-style cabinetry (**Excel Woodworks & Design**). In the kitchen through to the open-concept living area, stainless steel appliances, contemporary light fixtures (**J.D. Globe Electrical Services**) and shiny angular hardware (plumbing fixtures, **Mondeau Bathroom & Kitchen**) combine together to add an element of supportive bling.

In its open concept, and numerous vantage points, the space is connected through the details. "There is no particular item that doesn't go with the rest of the condo (i.e. hardware in the bathroom matches hardware in the kitchen)," says Jordan.

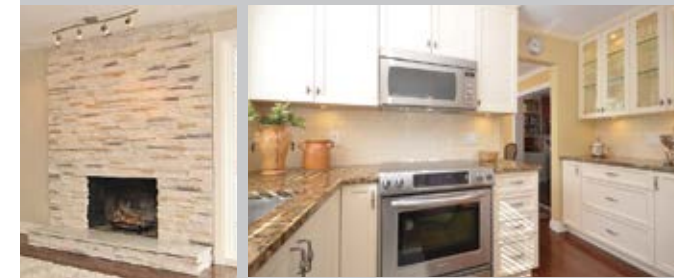
The neutral colour palette, while intended to hold appeal for a broad base of buyers, has the duplicitous effect of capturing and redistributing the light in the space.

Christiane says that "the design was

*Continued on page 44*




The black and white lines create an elegant, sophisticated feel. It's the ideal place to relax and enjoy the open space.





  
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The bedroom is set down a short hallway. The Beech wooden floors continue throughout the space. **BELOW LEFT:** Small details add colour to the condo.



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done around materials that were natural and elegant.” Because of the richness of the Beech hardwood floors from **Flooring Canada Ottawa** that spread throughout the unit, and the dark cabinetry, they elected soft, neutral colours on the walls and trim (**Canada Trim**). “It is a calm space – and that was the goal, to make it calm but beautiful,” she says.

Clearly pleased with the fruits of their labour, each family member derives different satisfaction.

Paul was really motivated by the challenges inherent in redefining a space, and draws the analogy of a firefighter: “Whenever there are problems on a construction site, everyone heads for the exits, but I’m the one heading back in to solve the problem.”

Jordan was struck by the importance of collaboration from beginning to end. “Our strength is in the process,” he explains.

For Cory, it was the width of the gap between before and after, and knowing that they engineered the transformation. “The really gratifying part for me is that we can take something that nobody wanted and make it into something that everybody wants... with each of us adding our own touch on it.”

What Christiane takes pride in is how they were able to transform the dated condo into a posh, sought-after suite, not because of a monster budget, but because of design ingenuity.

“Anyone can live like a VIP,” she says. “You don’t need a lot of money. It comes down to clever design... It is really just a question of how you pull it together. There is a joy in bringing spaces to people that are affordable.”

Clearly, this transformation is a testament to that, and is evidence of how strategic design choices can redesign a home and infuse it with design vitality and new purpose. **OH**

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