

Best Bang for Your Buck - Stretching your renovation dollar is key, no matter how large the project. Award contenders say how they do it.

By Paula McCooley, The Ottawa Citizen November 4, 2011

The best way to achieve a successful renovation project is through problem solving. That's according to contenders in the recent 2011 Housing Design Awards. Whether making a front porch more inviting, a kitchen more functional or carving out a better flow in a floor plan, entrants in the three renovation/addition categories, which were defined by price, say knowing how to get maximum results with a limited budget is key. (...)

Moving up in price, Lagois Drafting & Construction (lagois.com) added a loft and revamped a ground floor in a dated bungalow and then entered it in the \$100,000 to \$199,999 category.

The renovation included a vaulted front entry with angled transom windows and vaulted portico ceiling and two bedrooms and a bathroom in the loft addition. Walls were removed on the ground floor, creating a functional kitchen and eating/dining area with views and access to the backyard.

Company owner Herb Lagois says that when it comes to giving clients the best value as well as what they're looking for, he offers two options and does a cost comparison. The process, he says, has to be interactive with the client because when it comes to budgets, it's always a challenge.

"It's one thing to create the infrastructure or the structure," he says. "And then it's another thing to deal with finish, selection, and then the materials. I always relate it to buying a car. Once you start looking at all the options, it's amazing what's out there."

He holds what he calls a "trade day" where all relevant trades for a project are brought in to assess issues that might come into play and squeeze the budget. It's meant to avoid cost overruns.

"So if the plumber discovers something, then we can address it up front," says Lagois. "So hopefully as best as possible, we can deal with a lot of unknowns."

"The existing entry was very chopped up.

"And, typical of that age of home, every room was a very small compartment, the kitchen was very, very tiny, and not integrated into the rest of the space. There was no indoor/outdoor integration, so part of the design was to create a more formal, inviting type of entry, and open kitchen/living areas."

He says the client went with a durable granite surface in the kitchen which, while at a higher price point, offers good bang for their buck for the long term.

"It wears well and it's a non-porous type of surface, so from a health perspective, it's great," says Lagois, who worked with pre-made cabinetry, rather than custom, to keep within budget.

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