



The large, open rooms of this home offer the Brock family the space they need to grow. **LEFT:** Woodholme Park features lovely landscapes and condo-like living in north London.

# BIGGER IS BETTER

BY JASON MENARD // PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY BOROS

A strong attachment to the past combined with a healthy regard for the present: it's how Maureen and Brandon Brock embrace all aspects of their lives – and it's reflected in both the location and design of their Bridlewood Homes residence.

“We wanted something that would showcase our family heirlooms and antiques,” Maureen explained. The Brocks share an appreciation of history and are pleased at having their own family heritage showcased at the foot of one of the city’s noteworthy heritage buildings – Woodholme Manor. This Victorian Gothic Revival-style home is the centerpiece of **Woodholme Park Estates**, a 16-acre development by **Sifton Properties**.

The manor is across the street from the Brocks’ new home that, although not custom-built by the family, seemed to be custom-built for the family. “Once we saw the Bridlewood model home, everything else paled in comparison,” Maureen explains, adding although the family was interested, they were still in the midst of selling both their existing home and a cottage property. “**Carmine (Gargarella)**, the owner and president of **Bridlewood Homes** was wonderful. Though the model we saw had already been sold, he knew we were serious and kept us involved throughout the building process (of the next one).” *Continued on page 40*

The Brocks have blended touches of old world charm - like the scroll work on the kitchen island - with modern materials - like the granite countertop and stainless steel appliances. **RIGHT:** A wet bar gives the family multiple work surfaces in this busy kitchen. **BOTTOM LEFT:** A main floor laundry room was one of the "must haves" on Maureen's list for the new home. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The formal dining room makes entertaining easy, as it opens to the living area and the kitchen.



Once the purchase was complete, the Brocks were pleasantly surprised that there was very little to change inside. "Kim Morphy of **Gielen Design** was absolutely wonderful!" Maureen exclaims. "She designed exactly what we wanted without us having to tell her. We have fairly classic, timeless tastes and those family antiques show better in a classic-type home. We walked in and it felt like it was designed for us."

The one must-have? A large closet, which the couple now has in their master bedroom. "In our bedroom in Oakridge, we shared a six-foot rod in a closet for both of us," she says. Now, they have storage measuring eight-feet by 10-feet. The closet organizers came from **Nieman Market Design**.

Walking into the home, guests are greeted with a wide foyer, which opens onto an open-concept environment featuring a great room, dining room and kitchen. The bedrooms are nestled around small hallways to the side. Window coverings throughout the home came from **Blind & Drapery Co.**

In almost every room, there's a seamless blend of old and new. The

dining room features a beautiful **Jennings Furniture** set, but the visual anchor of the room is a century-old grandfather clock that came from the store that Brandon's grandfather once owned. Similarly, a stunning bedroom set purchased at **Austin & Taylor Home Furnishings** is accented by an antique writing desk owned by Maureen's grandparents. In the basement, a large high-definition television is balanced by an antique sewing machine.

The fusion of history and modernity continues in the kitchen. New state-of-the-art appliances from **London Major Appliances** blend beautifully with more traditional-styled woodwork and cabinetry, custom built and installed by **Jem-Dor Woodcraft Ltd.** and designed to match with the woodwork in the surrounding rooms.

While Maureen has gone to great lengths to ensure that her prized antiques are prominent features, Brandon is equally as thrilled with a feature that's just as omnipresent - yet invisible. *Continued on page 42*





"I absolutely love – and I recommend this to everyone now – the speaker system throughout the house," Brandon enthuses. "I'm serious. I never thought of doing this before, but it was installed by **Homematix Systems Inc.** and I love it."

The system is wired to the family's four outdoor living areas, replete with patio furniture from **Hauser**, in London. The main deck provides a stunning panoramic view of the area, as does the other private deck accessed through the master bedroom. Two more patio areas are accessed from the basement. The deck and garage doors are from **Doors Plus**.

"People talk about making their backyard their oasis," Brandon explains. "Here, I find myself sitting on the deck, reading, and enjoying the music and the outdoors much more." A small fee covers the maintenance of landscaping in common areas. For an additional fee, homeowners have the option of having the grass cut and snow removed.

With two teenagers still at home, the self-described "man cave" in the basement is the destination of choice for the Brock boys – both young and old. Motorcycle enthusiast Brandon kept his ride indoors, in the basement, throughout the winter (the bikes currently reside in the two-car garage).

"There is still plenty of space down here. On the initial plans, there were two other rooms and a third bathroom included," Maureen says, adding that there's room for growth for when her sons start having families of their own in a few years and grandkids come to visit. *Continued on page 44*

There is ample outdoor space to entertain. This balcony is one of two, plus the walkout basement leads to a deck used for barbecuing. LEFT: Maureen and Jackson enjoy relaxing outside.



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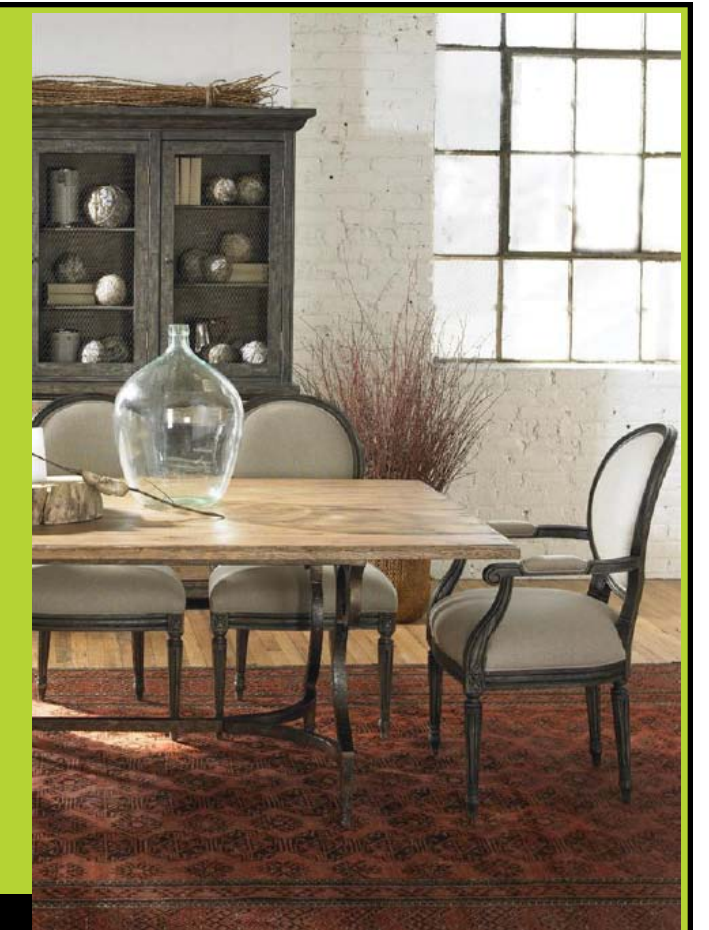
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The generous en suite is a step up from the cramped one in their previous home. It's a beautiful, functional space with custom woodwork and granite surfaces. A complete spa, it features a soaker tub, oversized shower, double sinks and access to the large closet. **BELOW RIGHT:** A calming sanctuary, the master suite has its own balcony for enjoying morning coffee.



The Brocks spent 23 years in their Oakridge-area starter home and were reticent about leaving an established, supportive community. But a growing family (especially vertically, the eldest son is six-foot six and faced challenges navigating the smaller confines of their previous home) necessitated the move.

"Big people, big dog, a little house – it was a bad combination," she says. "We even had an architect come to the house and look at doing large modifications, but for the cost involved and the things we needed it made more sense to buy new."

Fortunately, they've found themselves surrounded by like-minded residents who have embraced the community-building aspect. "This was probably the last undeveloped area within the City of London," Brandon

says. "People that move here have the same intention of making sure that this community works." And that includes the upcoming first annual Woodholme Park barbecue in early fall.

The couple explained the key to finding one's dream home – and both Brandon and Maureen are fully expecting that this will be where they enjoy their retirement years – is developing a level of trust with the builder.

"I don't think we ever dreamed that we'd buy a new house, but we really connected with Carmine," Maureen says. "You have to be comfortable with the builder and they have to understand your tastes and your style. We were in constant touch on a daily basis and the whole staff at Bridlewood was very helpful."

For the Brock family, bigger definitely turned out to be better. **OH**

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