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## UP & CLOSE & PERSONAL

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# RENOVATE OR RELOCATE?

— by ELISA KROVBLIT —

**Your house may be the perfect home** for you when you buy it, but as the years pass and your needs change, often you outgrow that once-perfect haven. The one-and-a-half baths that once meant you had a private ensuite and a powder room for guests are now overrun by kids. The office you never even thought you'd need has now become an essential, and you hate that it's tucked in beside the laundry room in the unfinished area of the basement – never mind that you hate dragging laundry up and down two flights of stairs...

From the smallest condo to the largest mansion, everything hits the market or gets renovated at some point. No home is the “perfect home” forever.

When you're finding you've outgrown your home and it's just not functioning for your lifestyle, it's time to make a change. Sometimes it's one event that necessitates the change – like the birth of a child. Other times it's a realization of cumulative problems that make life intolerable – when every surface in every room is covered with each family member's random belongings because there's no place to put it all – yet it's all necessary.

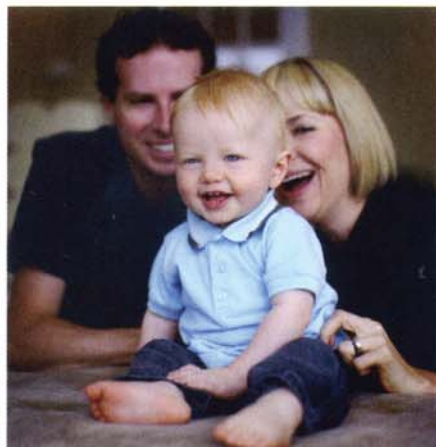


BEFORE AFTER

There are two things you can do – renovate or relocate. Both options have something to offer, both have their drawbacks, but either way, you need a home that meets your needs.

Philippe Beuparlant ACIDO, PMP, RDI, Principal of Beuparlant Design ([www.beuparlant.ca](http://www.beuparlant.ca)) is a Toronto-area designer who does design work for clients on both a commercial and residential level. Philippe found himself at the renovate or relocate crossroads recently. Experienced in helping clients bridge the gap between what they have and what they need, Philippe was faced with the question personally.

While it may be easier for a designer to have the vision to reinvent their own home, there are still many



## THE beauparlant FAMILY

factors, Philippe notes, that impact the decision-making process. While a designer may have the vision to create spectacular transformations of an existing space, there are some very real limitations and they need to weigh in on the equation.

When deciding whether to renovate or relocate, Philippe explains that you can't just consider your current needs, you have to think five or 10 years ahead so you don't outgrow the function and fit of your next space too quickly. There are several factors to look at, and each has its pros and cons. Finances, current house limitations, needs and wants, location, size and style are all a part of the decision.

**Finances** What is the selling price of your current home and the range for homes you'd be interested in purchasing? How affordable is a new place that would better accommodate your needs? How does this compare to the amount it would take to renovate your current home? Just because you can sell your home for more than you paid and feel this will afford you a better buying budget than renovating budget, don't let this limit your decision. Philippe and his wife had purchased their home in an up-and-coming area a few years earlier and found that, because the neighbourhood had since gentrified, their home was worth substantially more than they'd paid for it, making it possible to finance a major renovation by refinancing their home and leveraging some of that appreciated value.

**Limitations** Most physical aspects of a home, inside and out, can be changed with brilliant design, but some can't. You can add a second floor to a bungalow and even add a third storey to a two-storey home. You can gut the house and change its entire footprint. You can underpin a low basement to bring the ceilings to full height to add an entire floor of living space. You can change windows, insulation, walls, aesthetics and mechanics, even opt for Green energy solutions, or change the landscaping and the façade. But, Philippe points out, if your wish list has items like additional

parking, different community amenities, escaping bad neighbours, a detached house instead of an attached style, or simply more space than your current lot allows, then moving is your only option. There are just some things you cannot change. But if you love your neighbourhood and are looking for a similar home to your own but just need updates and modernization, then there's no need to move.

Something to consider is the stress your family will endure. Renovations are very stressful to live through, and the time lines aren't finite. If you open walls and find surprises, the budget and time line can increase drastically. But if you do go for a renovation, you can have every detail to your taste and specifications. You'll choose everything and enjoy it fresh and new, much like a new house but with your current location. If you choose to move, you see what you're getting, the time line is final and the expense is definite. You may have a hidden surprise or two, but with a good home inspection you've really tried it on before buying.

If you stay in your home during the renovation, you will have to endure workers coming and going as your home turns into a worksite, and you'll have to get used to functioning in a lot less space. Be aware that you'll need to safeguard children and pets from hazards. The contractor will make every effort to create a safe and sanitary environment, but dust, random nails and stored materials are a reality.

Philippe and his wife each require a home office and still want room for their young child to play. Their old lathe-and-plaster dinosaur had many issues. Visits to friends in the suburbs, says Philippe, made it even more clear their son needed more space. In the end, Philippe and his wife realized that they loved their community, and just needed to improve on the functionality of their home, so for the next four to six months they will be living through a renovation, while their vision and needs are brought to life.