



modern
home

April 2020

Cape Cod Meets West Coast Contemporary

CUSTOM HOME



Words by [Michelle Heslop](#). Photos by [Vince Klassen](#).

Armed with decades worth of Architectural Digest magazines, the homeowners had been gathering design inspiration for years when they hired architect, Brian Morris of [Brian T.W. Morris Architect](#) to design their custom, Cape-Cod style home. Considering the state of the rundown bungalow on the property, the owners knew they had to build new and even visited the East Coast to nail down some of the design's finer details. Built by [Griffin Properties](#), the home is a fresh take on a timeless style that bridges modern elements with traditional charm.



“We didn’t want a design that stood out from the existing neighbourhood and had a vision of a home that looked like it belonged at the beach,” says the homeowner, who adds that they interviewed several architects and after viewing their projects, felt Morris would be the best fit. After an in-depth communication design consult process, Morris drew up plans and the homeowners made one minor change to the first draft.



“The home is on an archeological site so we wanted to minimize the impact on the area,” says Morris, who adds that the new home was built in the same footprint as the original except for a 15×20 foot space that helped capture the views and more natural light. “I do a lot of drawings, not only architectural plans but also interior drawings. I plan all of the home’s features, right down to the electrical. Detailed plans allow the build to proceed smoothly and avoid delays along the way. My aim is to make it easy for the contractor to stay on budget and within timelines.”



The inspiration for the home's facade was an east coast shingle-style look which evolved naturally from the neighbourhood. Cedar shingles washed in driftwood grey adorn traditional gables and dormers while overhanging eaves allow the couple to enjoy the outdoors year-round. Rustic wood beams and a nautical oval window add a touch of the west coast to complete the home's polished curb appeal.



A salient aspect of the design brief was to create a home where the owners could age-in-place. Primary living spaces are conveniently situated on the main floor while the upper level enjoys an office space and rooms for guests or a future caregiver. An elevator shaft was pre-built for future needs. The wall of built-ins in the hallway creates an insulated barrier between the livelier main living areas and the serene master bedroom.



The main floor layout enjoys a smooth flow with some division between rooms for a more cozy, traditional feel. Centred around a hardworking island where guests tend to gather, the transitional style kitchen boasts modern features like the flat-panel cabinets in Beechwood and an efficient work triangle in the spacious room. A built-in wall of cabinetry provides ample storage to keep the space organized and clutter-free.



“The owner wanted the kitchen to be separate from the dining area while also creating a sense of connection,” says Morris, who designed a unique pass-through window that can be concealed with doors that fold back when not in use. Below the window, a built-in hutch keeps a place for everything and everything in its place.



An open, airy feeling was fostered in the living area with wood beams and contrasting white shiplap ceiling. A natural stone fireplace serves as an impactful focal point while clean-lined reveals and the absence of crown mouldings reflect the home's modern appeal. Built-in cabinets reduce visual clutter and add functionality to the room. Made by a local artisan, the stained glass windows were inspired by a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Chicago, offering added light with privacy. A smooth sense of flow between indoor and outdoor living spaces is enhanced via folding glass doors.



Solid fir emerged as a unifying theme in many details including multiple built-ins right down to all the windows and even the sashes. White oak flooring throughout the home, as well as the same type of knob on all cabinets, expresses the homeowner's design sensibility to integrate design cohesion and a synthesized sense of serenity.



“There are so many things vying for our attention in our world, I wanted to create a design that is symmetrical to create an underlying sense of calm. Architecture can accomplish this — your home should be a place where your mind can relax.”



The beachfront dwelling makes a contemporary statement without overpowering the surrounding homes. “Our home ticks all the boxes for livability — there is a balanced sense of flow that creates a calming environment. Everything is as it was intended to be. Brian is so thorough; it was worth doing all the front end planning to get it right with no delays or unexpected costs.”



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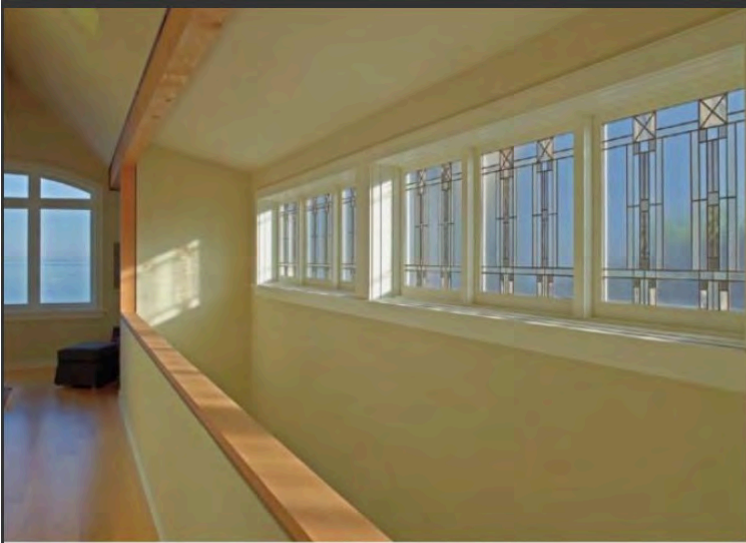
Timeless *elegance*

A beachside home embraces aging-in-place
with style and grace

WE LOOK AT OUR HOMES DIFFERENTLY when we enter our 60s, asking questions that were unimagined in our younger years. Will I be able to get up all those stairs when I'm old? How am I going to get in and out of the tub? Is there room for live-in help? What if I'm in a wheelchair?

hot **PROPERTIES**

BY DENISE RUDNICKI PHOTOS BY RUSS HEINL

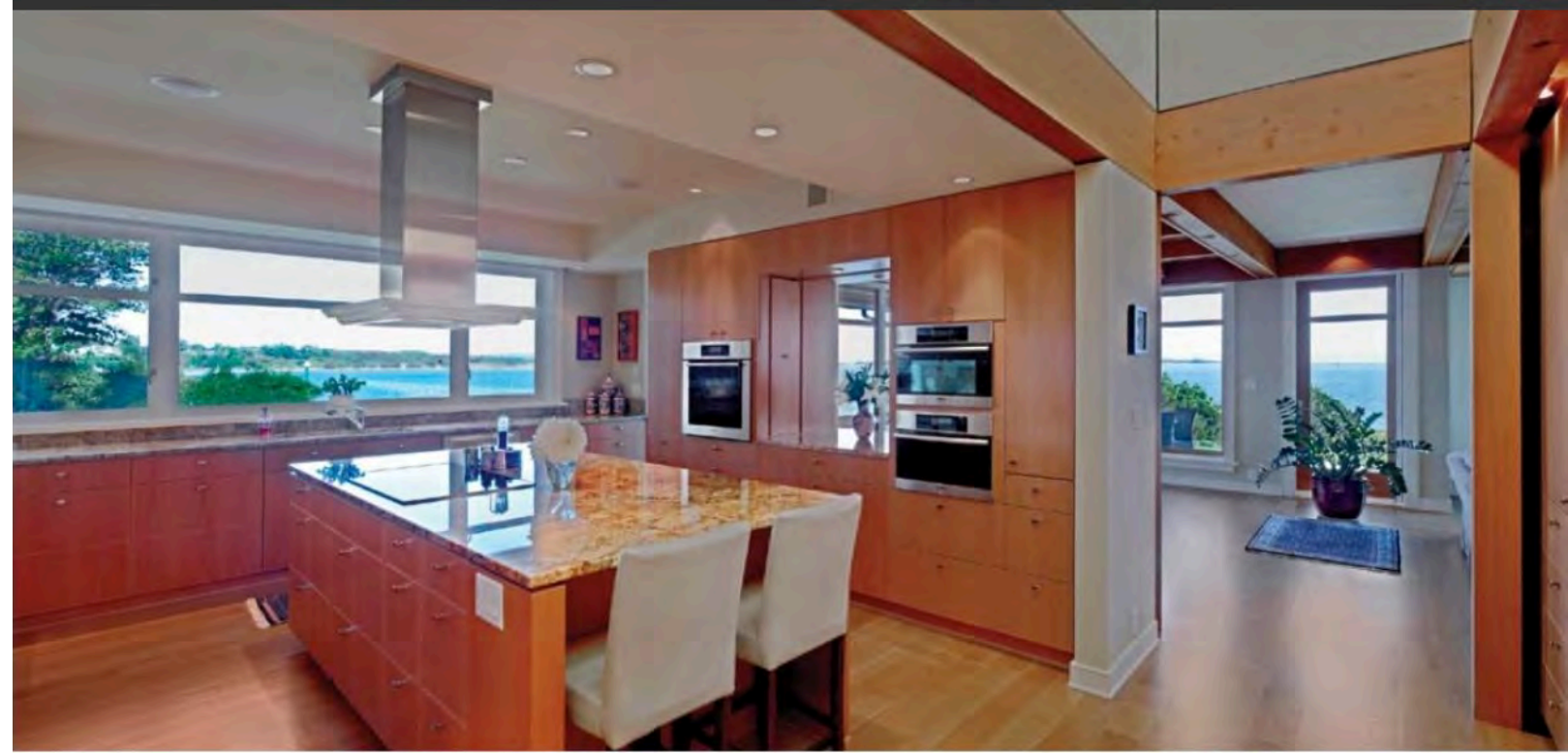


The main floor hallway has 27 feet of built-in storage.

AT LEFT: Top: Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired windows line the upper hallway; Centre: The spacious living room features beamed ceilings reminiscent of past ship-builders' style; Bottom: The second floor office overlooks the Strait.



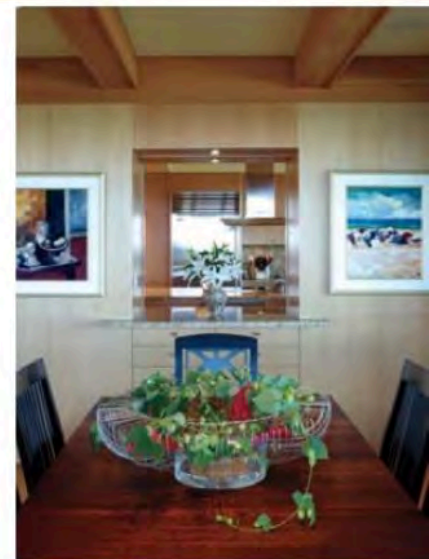
All good questions — and exactly the ones the owner of the home on the beach was asking a few years ago. Her parents had lived on this plot of land, in a typical suburban bungalow with two bedrooms and one and a half bathrooms. When they grew old, the house became a problem. The stairs were too steep up to the front door. The floors were carpeted or covered in slippery tiles, no good for a cane, never mind her father's scooter. The bathroom was not suitable for people who were no longer agile. There was no room for a caregiver. They had to leave.



The owner knew this fate might befall her. We're living longer, healthier, more active lives. Over the next two decades, the number of Canadians aged 65 to 74 will almost double, from 2.3 million to about 4.5 million. But we cannot escape the consequences of aging. Arthritic hands, dodgy knees, rheumatism, bad hips — our aging bodies demand we change the way we live. Tens of thousands of Canadians are in retirement residences, not always because they want to leave their homes but because the home forced them out.

All this was in the owner's mind as she contemplated what to do with this jaw-droppingly beautiful spot right on the

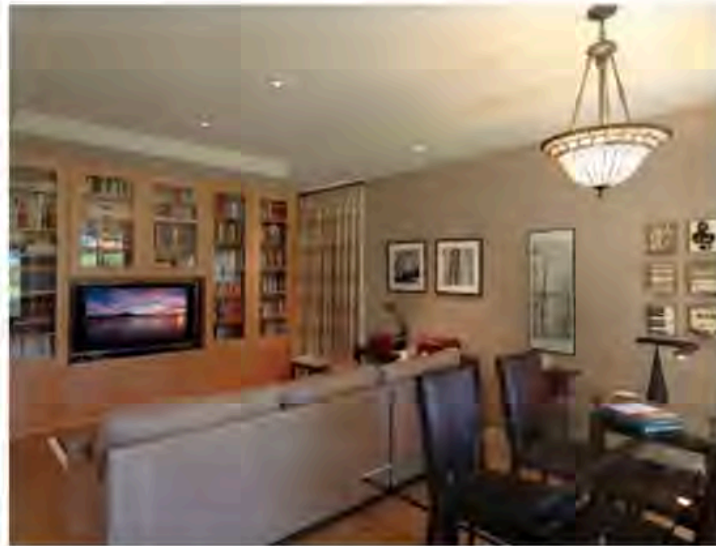
Wide doorways, lowered counters and seamless white oak floors throughout the main level make this home friendly to the frail elderly or the wheelchair bound.



beach, with San Juan Island and Mount Baker rising out of the sparkling waters and grey whales occasionally visiting the bay. She decided to build a retirement home that would allow her to age in place, with live-in help if necessary.

But she also wanted a beautiful home, inspired by the Long Island shingle houses she loves, with spacious rooms for entertaining, expansive views, and craftsmanship in every detail. So she went to architect Brian Morris, who designed a gracious, welcoming, and liveable home with specific aging-in-place features.

It helped that the lot is level. It means there is no rise to deal with. It's an easy walk (or wheelchair ride) to the front



The main floor library is a cosy retreat for reading, socializing, and watching television.

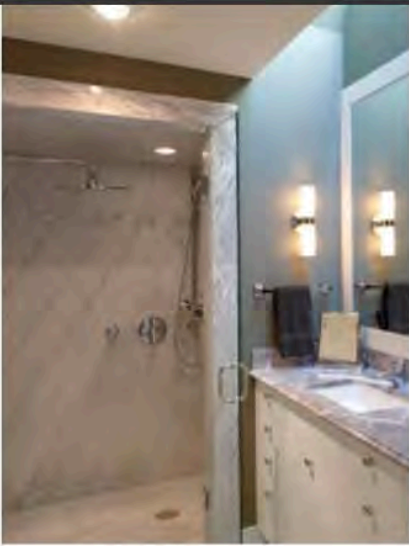
door. The 4-inch step up into the house can be adjusted when the time comes simply by lifting the outdoor tiles and adding more sand to the bed.

All the door handles are levers. If the owner's grip decreases, levers are easier to manage than door knobs. And every doorway in the house is three feet wide and with no jambs. Even the door to the laundry room is wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or scooter.

A lot of thought has been given to the possibility that the owner might eventually need a wheelchair. White oak floors grace the entire main floor, elegant but also suitable for wheels.

There are no carpets to trip over or snag the wheels and none of those little ridges that cover the transitions from carpet to floor in most homes.

The master bedroom is on the main floor, as is the laundry room and bathroom. That means the owner can live entirely on one level if necessary. The bathroom is off the bedroom and also big enough to accommodate a wheelchair. There is



no tub. Instead, there is a large walk-in (or roll-in) shower with an adjustable shower head that can be pulled off and used while sitting on the bench. Even better, the shower is large enough to enable a caregiver to assist if the owner cannot wash without help. The floor in the shower is marble but it has a honed finish that makes it slip resistant. Brian Morris' attention to detail is evident here. He put in a solid backing behind the tiling throughout the shower, and in the toilet and bidet area. This will make it easy to install grab bars later.

All the light switches in the house are lower than standard height, and they are the rocker type or paddle switch; 1-inch wide and easier to use than the smaller grip switches.

Even the closets are designed with aging in mind. The rods are currently standard height but are designed to be lowered when the time comes.

The large kitchen allows for manoeuvrability, with its wide spaces, lower storage, and drawers with full extension. The

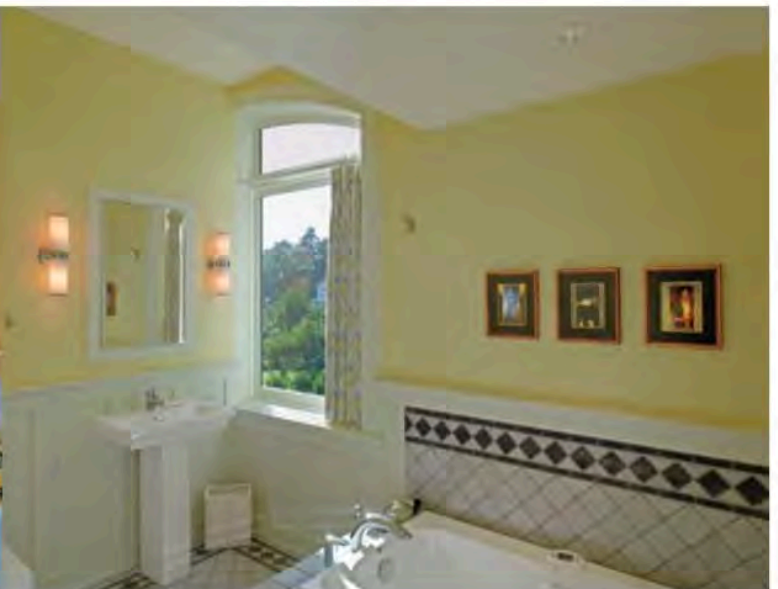
The master bedroom and adjoining bathroom on the main floor allow the owner to live on one level.

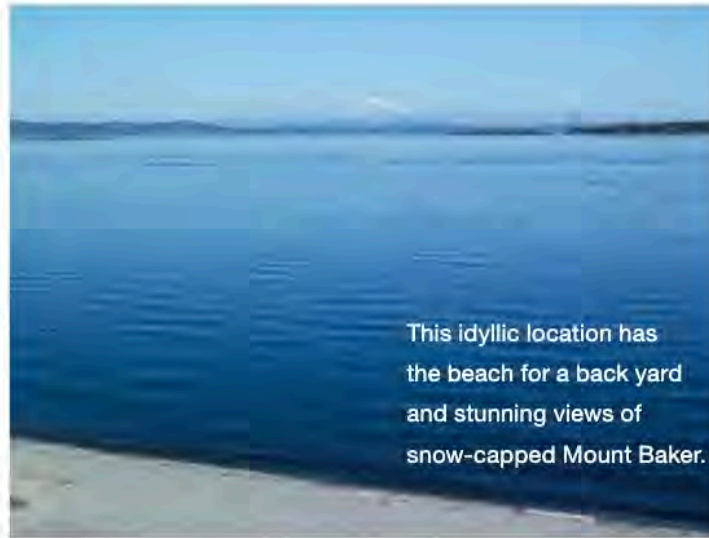
The second floor has a bathroom, bedroom, and sitting room for live-in help, should the time come when the owner needs a caregiver.

whole drawer opens, making it easy to see and reach.

There is an 800-square-foot second floor that the owner currently uses as a home office and for guests. If she were in a wheelchair and still wanted to go upstairs, space has been left to install an elevator at the side door. And if the owner needed live-in care, the upstairs is designed for that, too, with a bedroom, bathroom and sitting room — all with remarkable ocean views.

Even the outdoor space is designed with aging in mind. Extra-wide overhangs on three sides allow for a flat, comfortable, and dry outdoors walk or roll. Raised flower and herb





This idyllic location has the beach for a back yard and stunning views of snow-capped Mount Baker.

gardens allow tending without too much bending. And the garage has no rise or steps in and out.

Brian Morris also gave consideration to the materials used. For example, the house is clad in cedar shingles that are stained with an easy-to-maintain grey wash. It's important to use quality materials and craftsmanship that will reduce upkeep in the future.

Morris says all these details, like three-foot-wide doors and extra-wide halls, do not add a great deal to the building costs — and are much cheaper to add at the building stage than later, when a disability hits. It's a matter of thinking through how long you want to live in your home and whether that sunken living room will serve you well as you age. The success of this home is that it is beautiful and elegant, and will allow its owner to age-in-place in style.

In fact, Morris often brings up the option of designing and building features in the home that can accommodate a sudden disability or illness even with young families. "Things happen that we can't predict," says Morris. "And it's nice to have the ability to remain in your home."

SUPPLIERS AND TRADES: Architect: **Brian T. W. Morris Architect**; Contractor/Builder/ Cabinetry/Woodwork: **Griffin Properties Ltd.**; Interior Design: **Brian T. W. Morris Architect and Cathy Denny**; Painter (interior/exterior): **Haynes Painting**; Plumbing: **Majestic Mechanical**; Hardware: **Restoration Hardware**; Counters/Tiles: **Matrix Marble & Stone, Decora Ceramic Tile & Natural Stone**; Appliances: **Trail Appliances**; Plumbing fixtures: **Victoria Speciality Hardware**; Flooring: **Hourigan's Carpets and Linos Ltd.**; Windows/doors: **North West Windows & Doors**; Stained glass: **Calvin Butler**; Window Fashions: **Ruffell & Brown Interiors Ltd.**; Lighting: **Illuminations Lighting Solutions, Restoration Hardware**; Landscaping: **Hoek Van Holland Landscaping Ltd., Ardent Landscaping**; Masonry: **DDM Stonework Ltd.**; Alarm System: **ADT Security Services**; Floral design: **Kenmar Flower Farm** **VB**