

# The Cohesive Reno

*(Hint: It can be done!)*

HOW A TOTAL HOME RENOVATION WAS COMPLETED  
IN TWO SEAMLESSLY INTEGRATED PHASES.

BY KIM PEMBERTON | PHOTOS BY DASHA ARMSTRONG

When it comes to home renovations, having the work done in phases can make sense from an economic standpoint — allowing costs to be spread out over time. It also means you can likely continue to live in the home throughout the work, with breaks between phases.

But to create a seamless new look, it is also important to maintain consistency in the design approach — especially if different designers are involved and a period of time passes.

MAC Renovations did just this in a recently completed reno of a six-bedroom home in the Highlands overlooking Finlayson Arm. Although two different interior designers were used during the two phases, the designers collaborated to bring the same design sensibility to the project and created a cohesive renovation.

“It was a really good collaboration for two designers to work back to back with each other and the customer,” says senior project manager Margaret Cormode.

In phase 1, done over five months in 2021, the home’s primary ensuite, upstairs bathroom, downstairs powder room and gym were completed by designer Alexis Solomon. However, other design project commitments meant Solomon was unable to work on the second phase of the house. That’s when MAC Renovations stepped in. Led by their senior designer Azucena Saavedra Onuszkanycz, work on phase 2 — the kitchen, mudroom and main living space — began in February 2022 and was completed in the summer.

“I took a lot of inspiration from the [phase 1] ensuite and what the client wanted,” says Saavedra Onuszkanycz. “Both rooms [the ensuite and the kitchen] have a traditional feel.”

Instrumental in both phases was lead carpenter Colin Ferguson.

“One of the challenges is making sure everyone is on the same page,” says Ferguson. “The project manager did a great job in leading it and it went really smoothly. The key is what we call the Red Book, which is all the specifics of the project — basically, the bible — and having everyone look at that before the job even starts so everyone understands the job from day one.”

While the kitchen and bathrooms were both major renovations, other updates were also made throughout the home. For example, changing the flooring from a light fir to hickory stained to look like walnut, updating the river rock fireplace to ledge stone, sanding all the stair railings to match the flooring and adding new trim throughout the home. Light structural posts were also stained to match the new flooring. For a personal touch, the homeowner’s woodworker father created the wood mantles on both sides of the fireplace.

The before and after photos of the home show a dramatic change, particularly in the primary bedroom and kitchen. With the former, it was previously one large room with a fireplace that was removed to provide space to extend the ensuite. The original ensuite had a small vanity while the new vanity has a double sink and a linen tower.



## PHASE 1 > THE ENSUITE

The first phase of the renovation, by designer Alexis Solomon, included the home’s primary ensuite as well as the upstairs bathroom, downstairs powder room and gym.



**A sleek standalone tub and crystal chandelier take centre stage in the newly renovated primary ensuite, which was expanded to ensure the homeowners got everything they needed. That included a large walk-in shower, double sinks, extra cabinet storage and a makeup vanity.**

One of the most outstanding features in the room is the modern crystal chandelier over the standalone tub — something the homeowners really wanted. To accommodate the chandelier, a discreet box was placed in the large skylight so the wiring is concealed.

There were also major challenges in the original kitchen.

“It wasn’t a very functional kitchen,” says Saavedra Onuszkanycz. “The island was on two levels and cut up and the cabinets didn’t go to the ceiling.”

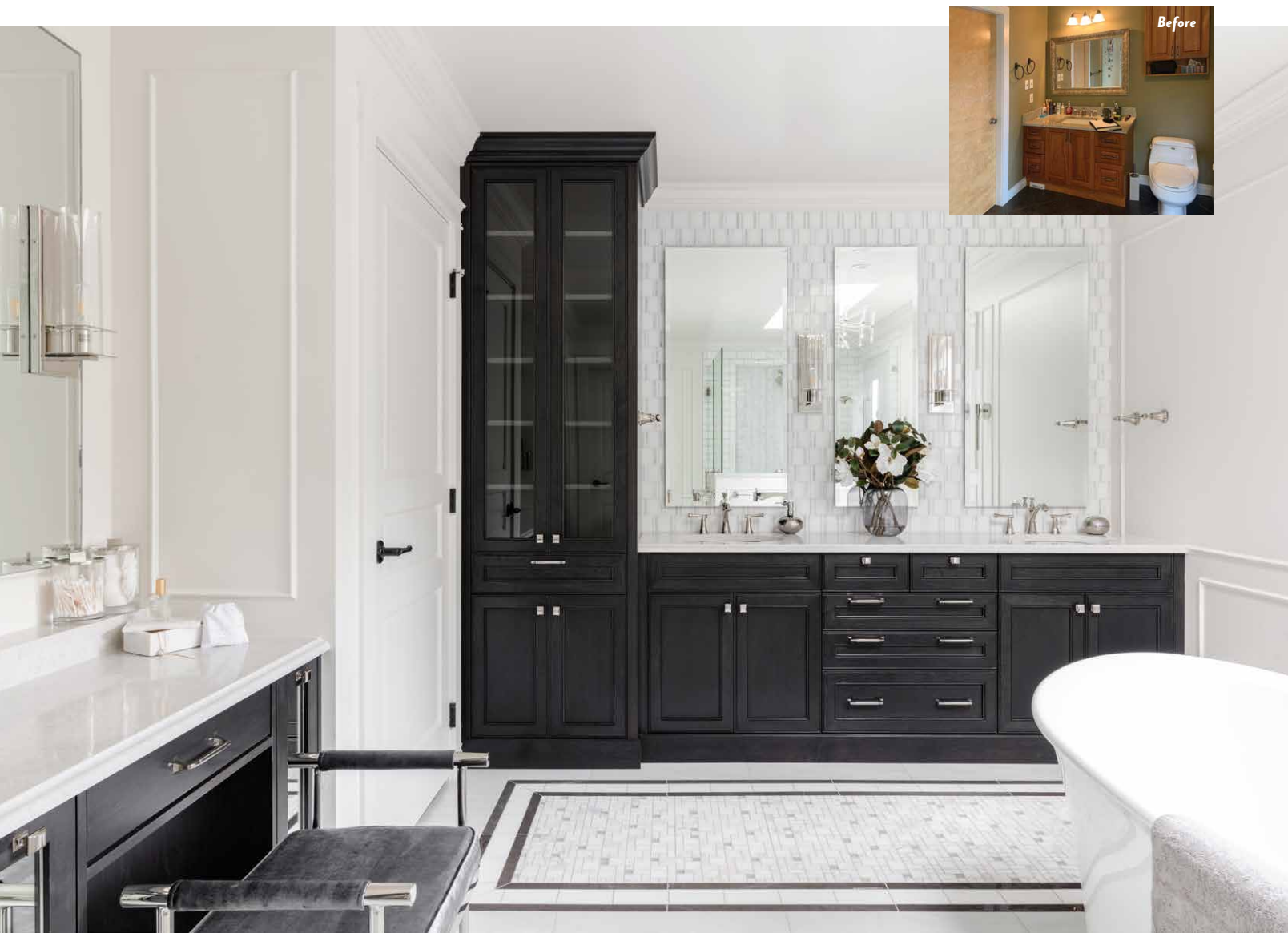
By building the cabinets to the ceiling, the homeowners gained more storage. Storage

was also added in a side cabinet and in the new kitchen island, designed by Saavedra Onuszkanycz with a custom three-inch-thick countertop, stepped out for a layered look. She also pulled the cooktop/oven and two side cabinets forward to add to a traditional feel to the kitchen.

“It gives it more interest than a flush range that is typically done,” she says.

Now complete, the two phases of the renovation are a perfect match, resulting in exactly what the homeowners wanted and demonstrating that, with qualified design guidance, you don’t always have to do everything at once.





The ensuite's tiles use marble and porcelain to artistic effect, with a bordered rug-like pattern in front of the double sink vanity (above) and showcases the wall shower set (left). By removing the bedroom's fireplace, the bathroom now has space for luxury items like the makeup vanity (right).



## HOW TO MOVING A BATHROOM

You might assume the location of a bathroom is something you just have to accept. But that's not necessarily the case.

"Moving a bathroom is not as difficult as some would think," says Azucena Saavedra Onuszkanycz, senior designer at MAC Renovations. "Depending on how far the move is or what is involved, it could be more costly but is usually not difficult. It really depends on the type of home and where the bathroom is located."

For example, plumbing typically cannot move far, if at all, in condos. If the bathroom you want to move is in a basement, that may mean cutting up and filling in concrete.

"Being able to have access from above and below the bathroom floor is key," says Saavedra Onuszkanycz.

While this means the rooms below a bathroom could be affected, it may still be a project worth undertaking.

### STEP 1 Ask yourself some questions.

- What is the investment you are willing to put into moving a bathroom?
- How would it benefit you, your life and your home experience?
- Does a simple makeover of the bathroom in its existing location solve its issues?
- Does your existing bathroom have storage spaces around it that could be used to enlarge the bathroom rather than moving it to an entirely new location?
- Do you have another bathroom to use or will you need to move during renovation?

### STEP 2 Talk to an experienced general contractor or design/build firm to find out if the project is feasible and get pricing for the entire project.

"Bathrooms may be a small part of the home yet they are similar to kitchen renovations, requiring just as many tradespeople, if not more," says Saavedra Onuszkanycz.

### STEP 3 Consult a designer.

A designer may have ideas you haven't considered and may come up with a solution you like better than moving the bathroom. "In the past, I have turned two bathrooms that were side by side into one big ensuite or the opposite, and other times, I've adjusted the size of one bathroom to make another larger and more functional."

Pre-planning is key in moving a bathroom and not all contractors offer design services. A designer can assist with materials selection, provide options, and make the entire process less time consuming. "A fully planned-out renovation with drawings and full selections prior to the commencement of the reno makes for a smoother and shorter renovation time," says Saavedra Onuszkanycz.



Although the downstairs powder room in this home was done by a different designer in phase 2, it replicates many of the same details seen in the ensuite bathroom done in phase 1, such as the wall panelling and trim detail.



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## PHASE 2 > THE KITCHEN

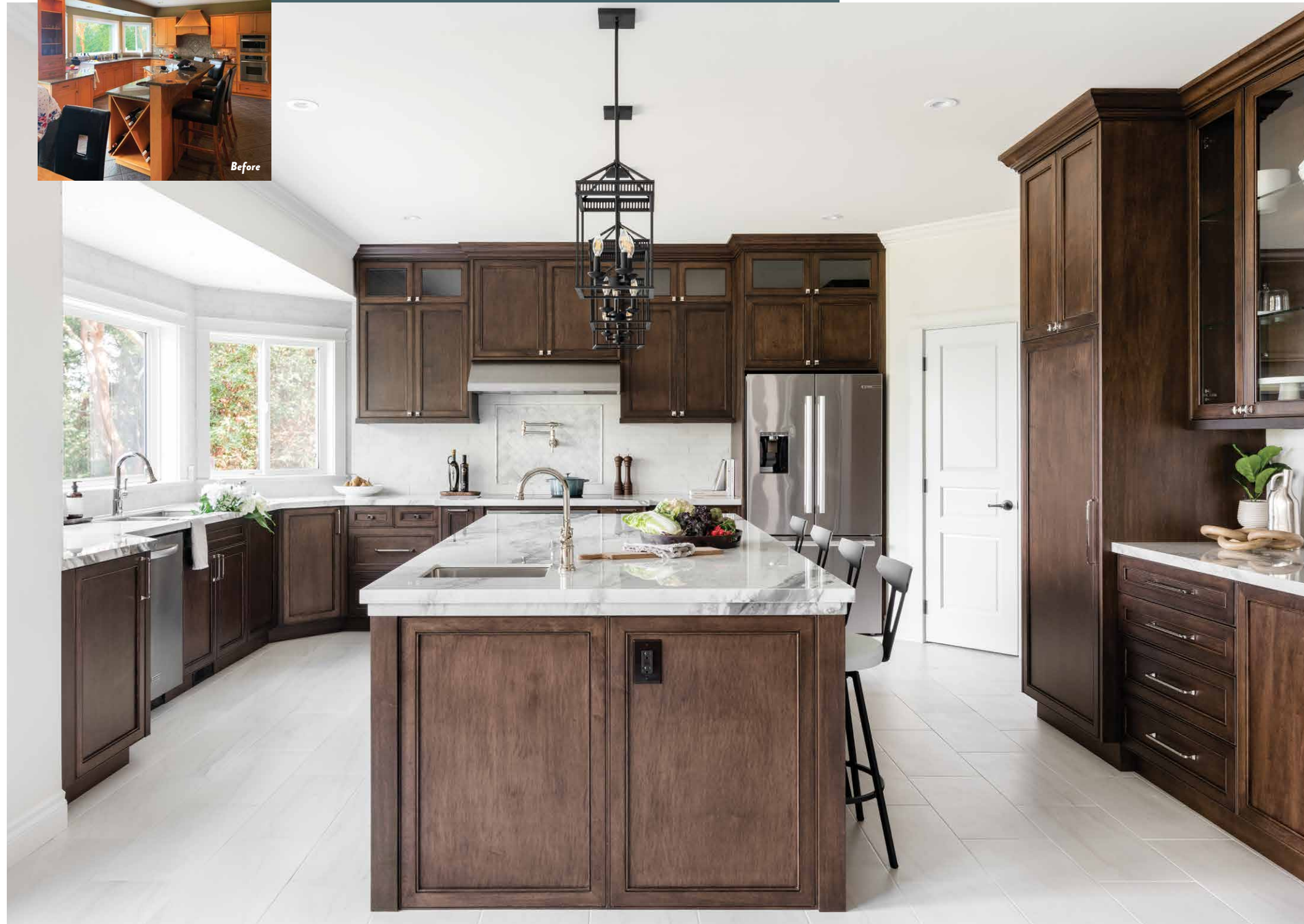
MAC Renovations, led by designer Azucena Saavedra Onuszkanycz, completed phase 2: the kitchen, as well as the mudroom and main living space.

**“I TOOK A LOT OF INSPIRATION FROM THE [PHASE 1] ENSUITE AND WHAT THE CLIENT WANTED.”**

— Azucena Saavedra Onuszkanycz,  
senior designer, MAC Renovations



Before



The kitchen underwent a major renovation, where the cabinetry was reconfigured. Straight lines instead of the previous angular counters made it more functional. The island is now rectangular with more space for a microwave and extra sink (above and below). The pantry features a bar fridge and glass shelving display.

The fireplace was updated with ledge stone from Decora Tile. The homeowner's father made the new wood mantles installed on either side.



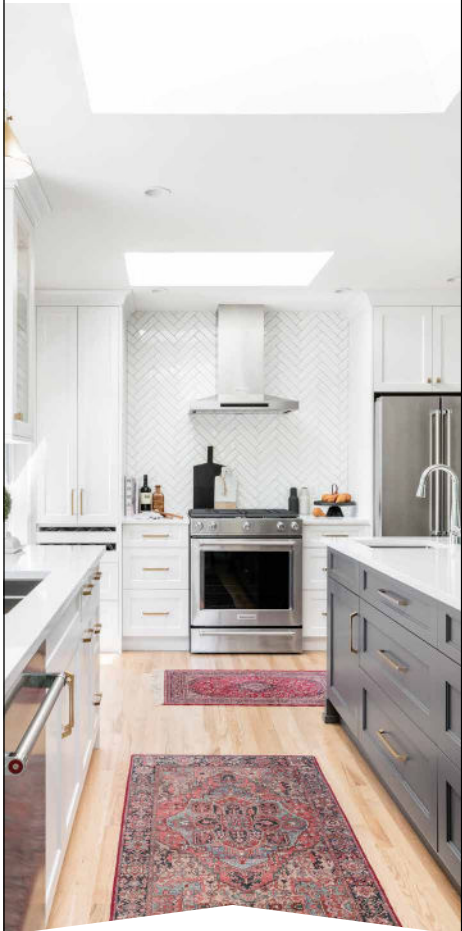
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PHASE 2 > THE MUDROOM



The mudroom was reconfigured to allow a set of benches that face one another. The old closet (seen in the "before" photo) was removed and a new closet was placed on the other side. This allows for a better flow in the space, which also features new flooring and a modern pendant.



The mudroom is conveniently located at the back of the house and leads into the kitchen. Custom benches, with coat hooks above and drawers below, maximize storage space.

LIST OF RESOURCES

DESIGN BUILD (CURRENT PHASE 2, 2022): **MAC Renovations** with designer **Azucena Saavedra Onuszkanycz** | DESIGNER (PHASE 1, 2021): **Alexis Solomon**  
KITCHEN AND MUDROOM TILE FLOOR: **Decora Tile** | CUSTOM KITCHEN CABINETS: **Hobson Woodworks** | COUNTERTOPS: **Stone Age Marble**  
BACKSPLASH: **Decora Tile** | KITCHEN FAUCETS: **Brizo** | KITCHEN SINKS: **Blanco** | FIREPLACE STONE: **Decora Tile** | LIVING ROOM FLOORING: **TDI Flooring**



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