

WELCOME
from VHF



Vancouver Heritage Foundation is a registered charity supporting the conservation of heritage buildings and structures in recognition of their contribution to the city's economy, sustainability and culture.

Through educational walking and house tours, lectures, talks, workshops, and special events, VHF is helping create a city that repairs and reuses its older buildings rather than demolish them.

For more information on any of our tours or events we invite you to visit our website: www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org

Thank you to the 2013 Tour Sponsor:



THANK YOU!

The Vancouver Special Tour is only possible through the tremendous effort of over 90 people who volunteered their time, expertise and homes. We appreciate all of their contributions to ensure the success of this tour.

Special thanks to all of the 2013 homeowners who generously opened their homes!

Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers:

Christiane Bouchard, Shelley Bruce, Stewart Burgess, Gloria Burgess, Annalies Camfferman, Miguel Castillo, Martin Ferries, Sherry Fraser, Peter Genge, Carol Gordon, Livia Huang, Sydney Hughes, Jackie Kanyuk, Paul Kleving, Jessica Little, Webster Licaros, Anne Lidstone, Bonnie Low, Laverne MacFadden, Ursula MacLeod, Shirley McCall, Debra McGerrigle, Laura McMurrin, Stephanie McWilliams, Lorene Morgan, Peter Mustard, Herma Neyndorff, Sandra North, Paul Nursey, Adele & Sabina Oliver, Karen Russell, Brenda Sawyer, Bev Taylor, Carolyn Taylor, Raluca Vetrici, Shayla Walker, Lindsay Wilkinson, Paul Wong and Helen Wood.

1 W 43rd Ave



Having outgrown their former ranch style home, this Westside family of four saw possibilities in the large footprint and extra deep lot of this 1977 Vancouver Special. The house, excluding the indoor pool, is 3300 sq. ft., and the lot is 41' x 181'. The sale of their previous home, a relatively small rancher situated on a large lot, provided the funds necessary to purchase and then renovate the Special from top to bottom.

Demolition and building new was not considered as they estimated it would cost more and take longer to get their dream home. This Vancouver Special gave them all the square footage they needed. The large footprint was of huge benefit as the building permit for the renovation was received in two weeks because they were not adding to the house. The renovation only took six months and they were moved in by February 2013. The owner oversaw all elements of the renovation from implementing her own design using a draftsman, to working closely with the contractor and trades to ensure her vision was carried out.

The house was flipped on its head. Where the original house, like many Specials, had bedrooms on the lower level and the living and kitchen upstairs, the house was reconfigured so that the living, kitchen, family room and office were on the lower level which opens onto the original, but cleaned up, indoor pool and Jacuzzi. The beautiful tongue & groove cedar ceiling in the pool area has been refinished. The bedrooms were moved upstairs. The living, dining and kitchen areas were dug down 18" to give greater ceiling height. The stairs were moved towards the rear giving the house a gracious entrance way with a double height ceiling. Upstairs are four bedrooms, two with ensuite bathrooms, and a second family room which opens up to a huge roof top deck over the swimming pool.

Floors in the house are either wide plank grey oak or polished grey concrete. The kitchen cabinets and other built-ins are custom. The original garage which was contiguous to the swimming pool was demolished and a new, smaller garage was built to the rear of the property giving the family a private backyard close to the house.

To say that the family loves the house is an understatement. From initially thinking they would never use the pool, they now use the pool everyday. It is a focus for fitness and family fun. The open floor plan, wide halls and multiple living areas are perfect for a family with teenagers.

THIS BROCHURE IS YOUR 2013 TICKET
SATURDAY 21st SEPT. 1pm - 5pm



VANCOUVER SPECIAL
HOUSE TOUR



This brochure is
your 2013 ticket

Presented by
Royal LePage Westside
SEBASTIAN ALBRECHT
TheVancouverSpecial.ca

Important tour reminders:

- **Wear Slip-on shoes** that can be easily removed. You will be required to remove them at the entrance to every house.
- Bring a **Vancouver street map** to help you find the houses.
- **Bring this brochure to every house.** Volunteers will check off each house upon arrival.
- **No Photography or cell phone use on tour property.** Anyone who does not adhere to this may be asked to leave.



The 'special' Vancouver Special

Often viewed as the 'ugly duckling' of Vancouver's residential neighbourhoods, the Vancouver Special is an important part of the city's architectural history. With their flat fronts, raised basements, boxy shapes, and low pitched roofs, these homes are unique to our city because they were designed to optimize standard Vancouver lots under the RS-1 District Zoning Schedule.

After Vancouver Specials first appeared in 1965 as a way to provide quick, inexpensive housing for a rapidly increasing immigrant population, the estimated number of Vancouver Specials swelled to 10,000 dwellings by the mid-80s. The design could be purchased from a stock plan office for about \$65. Building permits were issued quickly and construction was completed in the matter of a few weeks. The flexible floor plan, and large footprint provided room for extended family to live together, or for an entire floor to be rented out as a mortgage helper.

Specials do not usually deliver on energy efficiency. Original low-cost construction included baseboard heating, single-glazed aluminum windows and roofs that were poorly insulated. Attracted by the large footprint and simple, flexible floor plan, modern owners are taking down interior walls to create light airy spaces, installing state of the art mechanical systems, insulating walls and ceilings and installing energy efficient windows.

Vancouver Special homeowners can make alterations to suit their own life style and it is fascinating to discover just how 'special' these Specials can be. We hope you enjoy the tour.



GUIDELINES FOR VISITORS

- Houses are open from 1-5pm only, no earlybirds or latecomers.
- Photography is strictly prohibited.
- All attendees must have a ticket & be at least 6 years of age (infants in front carriers are permitted without a ticket, no other exceptions).
- Please do not bring large bags & backpacks.
- No food, drink, smoking, or pets on tour properties.
- Cell phone usage is not permitted inside homes.
- Do not park in driveways, or block driveways or streets.
- Refrain from touching furniture, art, and household items.
- Expect a line up outside some of the homes.
- No washroom facilities are provided in the houses.
- You will be asked to remove your shoes at each home.
- We regret the tour is not mobility device accessible.

Vancouver Heritage Foundation
402 - 510 W. Hastings St. Vancouver BC V6B 1L8
604.264.9642 www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org
[facebook.com/TheVancouverHeritageFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/TheVancouverHeritageFoundation) twitter.com/VanHeritage

2 E 61st Ave



Gaining inspiration from a VHF Vancouver Special Tour, contractor Shaun St. Amour put his knowledge about green and affordable building methods into practice when he snatched up this Sunset neighbourhood Special in 2012. St. Amour was also looking to create a design that could be replicated easily and affordably across the more than 10,000 Specials in Vancouver. The St. Amours found Sunset was a reasonably priced option to other neighbourhoods. Finding a Special across from a park on a south-sloping lot that could accommodate a laneway house and looking out over the Fraser River, were added bonuses.

St. Amour, with Metis Design|Build, took the house back to the studs and re-configured the interior public spaces allowing the living, dining and kitchen to extend from front to back. They opened up the long centre hall and incorporated it into the new kitchen. Other design moves made use of wasted space including removing the unusable front balcony and replacing it with a box-out window, as well as drawers in the stair risers.

Energy efficiency is an important part of the St. Amour - Villagomez design philosophy. The furnace and hot water tank were replaced by a heat recovery ventilation system and an on demand hot water system. An air tight building envelope, high efficiency fireplace, radiant heat bathroom floors, electrical baseboards turned low, low-flow faucets, dual-flush toilets, recycled tiles and re-using misc fixtures from previous St. Amour renovation projects were added. Windows were created between interior spaces (reusing some of the original exterior windows) to 'share' natural light. New windows were strategically located and sized to maximize passive solar energy from the east and south, while reducing the overheating solar gain from the west. The fixed clerestory windows located high within the living room, were changed to operable awning windows. This, along with ensuring that new windows opened in accordance with dominant wind directions in the summer months, served to facilitate natural ventilation and air flow within the house.

The plan is to build a laneway house that nestles into the south-sloping landscape behind the Vancouver Special, leaving the beautiful river views of the St. Amours and their neighbours unobstructed. Due to laneway house regulatory requirements the rear deck of the original house will need to be cut back, but the same rigorous adherence to affordability, and green design and building practices will be followed in all aspects of the creation of the laneway home - reflecting the shared St-Amour-Metis Design|Build belief that better, greener design doesn't need to cost more money.

3 Ross Street



Though not originally looking for a Vancouver Special when house hunting, the owners were intrigued when they saw this corner lot house. Sitting in the living room they could see out into the park and also into the kitchen. The circular flow and openness of this 41 x 44 foot long home has since convinced them they made the right decision.

Built in 1970 by a developer as his retirement home, the house boasted a hard-plumbed hot tub, wet bar and rainbow party lights over the window valences. These are gone but other unique features remain. The house has multiple exposed beams and a ceiling-height marble fireplace in the centre of the house. The fireplace's cement brickwork support travels from the full-height garden suite slab to the roof. It's considerable weight is additionally supported by two structural steel I beams running the width of the house. These are not typical Vancouver Special features but custom elements that are a distinct homage to Mid-Century modern and rancher-style architecture.

Previous owners layered the house with wallpaper, paint, and white shag carpets. The house retains the original floor plan with the exception of the removal of a kitchen wall and the shifting of one closet to enlarge the master bathroom. All the exterior walls' paneling and drywall were replaced to add insulation and allow the installation of custom high-e thermal window units. Most of the ceilings retain the original popcorn finish. The subfloor was replaced and carefully chosen solid Jatoba flooring was installed and stained to echo the exposed fir beams. The kitchen and bathrooms have been updated but their layouts are close to original. Energy efficiency and comfort were priorities during the renovations: the home was fully reinsulated, high-efficiency window units were selected, radiant heat shielding installed in the attic, wood burning fireplaces have had high-efficiency directly vented gas-burning units installed, a high-efficiency furnace was selected, and radiant under-floor heating was installed through the kitchen and family room.

The owners were tempted to remove the muddy yellow-brown stone fireplace, but after replacing the classic cross-hatched yellow transom glass in the front windows with clear glass, they reconsidered. Meticulous steam cleaning of the marble stonework revealed what is now a centre piece of the house. The fir beams were stripped of layers of paint and wood filler.

A new metal roof over the existing tar and gravel roof and 12" attic insulation were added so they don't hear the rain. Outside the entry is a thermostatically-controlled attic fan that vents any accumulated heat. Solar gain in the summer requires shades on the large kitchen skylights. The exterior cladding is original. They painted the siding and brickwork and added the modest profile cedar trim around the windows.

4 E 38th Ave



Gaining inspiration from a previous VHF Vancouver Special Tour, the owners decided that renovating a Special would get them the space, openness and light they desired in a new home. A full height lower floor was an important criteria.

Leaving the exterior of the house intact and taking the interior down to the studs, they got to work with architect Margot Innes. Structurally, they increased the roof trusses from 2 x 6" to 2 x 10" on the half above the living area of the house. The exterior 2 x 4" walls were left but furred out for greater thickness on the lower level. Spray foam insulation of differing densities was strategically applied to achieve an R-value of 20+ throughout. The exterior stucco finish was resurfaced to hide several eliminated or re-sized windows. The original front façade bricks remain but have been painted. Unlike most Vancouver Specials this house did not have a narrow, front balcony with a metal railing. A cantilevered overhang was added over the front door to give dimension to the front exterior and for practicality. An awning was also added off the kitchen in the back to allow year-round barbecuing. Behind the home, retaining walls were redone with new footings and drainage, and the driveway re-poured with concrete.

In the interior, the upstairs living area ceilings were vaulted to create more volume and to house recessed lighting. The front door was widened to 42" and the ground floor hall was widened by 4" to create a more spacious feel to the entry and passageway. Other changes included opening the stairwell to bring more light into the foyer by eliminating closet spaces on each floor. The central hall upstairs was repurposed creating a communication centre on one end and a walk-in pantry on the other. The house contained six bedrooms initially. Two bedrooms were converted to offices. The master bedroom was expanded slightly and another bedroom and small bathroom reconfigured to a master walk-in closet and ensuite bathroom. The lower level retains a guest bedroom. Built-in cabinetry is evident throughout the spaces. The fireplaces were retained and converted to sandpan gas-fired open units.

Mechanically the original electric baseboard heat was replaced by a gas-fired hot water heat exchange unit which heats the baseboards and the domestic hot water tank. Interior finishes include locally manufactured wide plank engineered hardwood in a grey oiled matte finish, engineered quartz in an orange colour on the vanity counters and grey-honed engineered quartz on the kitchen counters.

A dedicated vegetable garden was planted in the south-facing back yard in late June with herbs in a side garden adjacent to the driveway. Sod was laid in the front and a small perennial garden planted against the house until planning for more extensive landscaping can be completed.

5 E 22nd Ave



As you approach this house, be prepared for a surprise. The only exterior indication that anything has been changed at this unique Special are the updated entry doors.

When the new owners sought to renovate this Special, they wanted to open up the ground floor to create a nice independent rental unit, along with a showstopper open plan home for the family upstairs. Their budget focused on some mechanical upgrades and clean new finishes to the interior. The one exterior alteration is at the back of the house where the former small back door and window off the eating area were replaced with large French doors. These draw natural light into the kitchen that was shifted to the back of the house. Walls between the original eating area/kitchen and kitchen/living room were removed to create an open plan living area.

Colour choices have all taken their queues from the stunning stone and marble hearth fireplace, part of a previous renovation. The kitchen has new appliances and a stunning Three Form custom sliding resin panel wall that hides extra kitchen space. A stacking washer/dryer is also hidden here leaving more space available for the bathrooms. The independent master and second bathrooms were created where there was originally a single bathroom. The master bathroom features a barrier free shower with sloping floor drain. The owner loved the fully exposed integrated rain shower unit that slides vertically for standing or seated bathing.

The entry layout is unaltered but a curve in the stairway was straightened and up-lighting now accentuates the stairs that lead up to a glass feature. The owners wanted very durable flooring and loved the look of wood but didn't want the maintenance of wood floors. Tile with the appearance of wood was an investment in flooring that will last. The main structural wall was left mostly intact except in the rear where it was shifted slightly to enlarge the bedrooms and create the two bathrooms. The three bedrooms are in the same place but enlarged towards the centre of the house with the removal of the typical Special hallway. All drywall has been replaced to allow for insulation and to accommodate the shifting of interior walls and new bathroom configuration. Mechanical upgrades included an on-demand hot water system and a new high efficiency furnace.