



↑ A gracious porte cochere lends an elegant welcome for this seven-bedroom, seven-and-a-half bath, modern mansion in the Uplands.





## A HOMEBUILDER'S

# Home

*Hersh draws on past experience  
while looking to the future*

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→ TEXT BY **CAROLYN HEIMAN** PHOTOS BY **GARY MCKINSTRY**

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**H**OMEBUILDER BARRY HERSH has explored a full range of residential developments, but he and his wife, Brenda, have happily settled into a lavish seven-bedroom home in the Uplands.

The couple once built and lived in one of the narrowest houses in Vancouver. It was an 11.5-foot-wide infill house that in 1980 was on the front edge of a new wave of construction endorsed by city planners, including those in Victoria, who were looking to minimize urban sprawl by using underdeveloped, narrow lots to add affordable housing stock. Later, Barry built some of the area's largest luxury homes — upwards of 10,000 square feet — in the city's west end.

Now retired to Victoria, the couple and their adored Yorkie are enjoying their new home, which Brenda emphatically states will be their last. ("Although with Barry, there is always the next project," she smiles.)





↑ The granite island and built-in circular table have double bullnose edging, approximately 1.5 inches thick, giving it substantial heft. The color, neptune bordeaux, offers multiple variations and color strains.

“We’ve been blessed with having lived in more than one beautiful home,” says Brenda, adding she is humbled by her good fortune.

This house repeats themes found in some of the 100 or so luxury custom and spec homes Barry built in Vancouver, after he gave up a banking career in his 30s. These themes include towering ceilings, statement-making porte cochere (“I like the look, and I like being able to drive under and not get wet,” says Barry) and a kitchen that calls out both extravagance and utility.

The kitchen and sewing rooms are Brenda’s two favourite areas. With windows facing two directions, natural light floods the areas at most times of the day. An avid seamstress — who makes almost all her own clothes — Brenda has put her stamp on the upstairs sewing room by adding refinished mirrors, old sewing cabinets and an inexpensive Duncan Phyfe table in soft chalk colours,

painted grey and celadon green. Meanwhile, Barry admits to teasing Brenda by keeping the fact he’d installed her much-desired hardwood floors a secret — until he lifted the carpet covers to reveal them.

The kitchen is bejewelled with eight slabs of granite, covering the walls and creating an exceptionally generous counter space on the island, built-in circular table and countertops. The nine-by-six-foot-wide island was created with single slab of granite, eliminating any need for a seam. Weighing over 1,500 pounds, it took eight men to carry it into the house, moving it inch-by-inch along the ground.

The kitchen’s warm cherry millwork casts a traditional glow over the area that Brenda, an avid cook, regularly presses into service. (The couple prefers eating home except for the occasional trip to Haultain Fish and Chips.) She also uses the area to make jams and preserves — a



↓ At 8,500 square feet, the house has many rooms, all generously proportioned and flooded with natural light.







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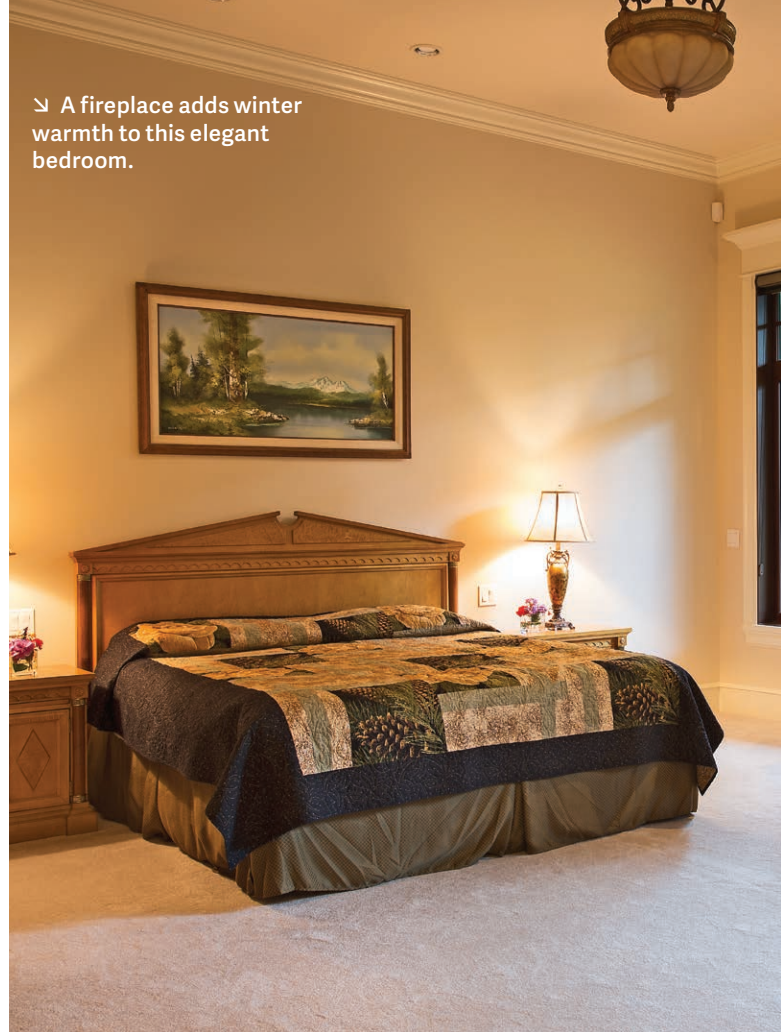
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↘ A fireplace adds winter warmth to this elegant bedroom.





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↑ A grand public space unfolds after entering the home.





*Homebuilder Barry Hersh drew on his building experiences to design the house.*

skill she acquired from her mother and grandmother, growing up in small-town Ontario. She keeps an eye on the market for seasonal produce that can be turned into handmade gifts for friends and neighbours.

Mike and Dillon Brown, owners of Victoria's Island Dream Kitchens, were instrumental in completing the cabinetry after the company originally contracted for the job went bankrupt. Barry notes that Dillon was very hands-on, efficiently stepping in and completing the kitchen assembly, installation and staining and, most importantly, cutting the stress that arose from the unexpected construction hiccup.

Providing a tour of the house, Barry gleefully points out the couple's financially judicious furnishing purchases — most from local auctions, consignment stores and Craigslist. In one mission, he purchased

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↑ The huge master en suite is sheathed in pale, soothing blond tile and marble.

3,000 pounds of furnishings from Misty's Consignment in Rancho Mirage, California.

"Barry was like a kid in a candy store," says Brenda, recalling the day they visited the mammoth showroom of accessories and furnishings, which were acquired mostly from downsizing California homeowners.

At 8,500 square feet, the house has many rooms — all generously proportioned — available to accommodate these pieces.

"When you come from nothing you're happy to tell of your good fortune."

Barry drew on his building experiences to design the house. Ceilings are capped at 12 feet, a height that spells deluxe, but does not create complexities around heating and cooling.

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In terms of styling, they lean to more traditional tastes but will often blend, where appropriate, a touch of “new.”

Leaving the expansive foyer, a large and atmospheric public space unfolds, disclosing an imposing dining room that then yields to an informal but large family room adjoining the kitchen. Oversize tilt and turn windows line the back of the house and open to the private backyard.

In keeping with energy efficiency trends, the 156 pot lights throughout the house are LED with bulbs that promise a 23-year lifespan. However, thinking ahead, Barry purchased 12 extra, noting, “While I should not have to replace a light bulb until I’m 87, I wasn’t 100 per cent confident about the 23 year claim.”

Speaking of supplies, Barry and Brenda paid a lot of attention to creating ample storage space for the home, which does not have a basement. They have “his” and “hers” storage cupboards upstairs, with Barry’s neatly organized and filled with video equipment, home supplies and movies. Brenda’s shelves, meanwhile, are stacked with vintage sewing patterns and metres and metres of fabric and yarn.

Looking to the future, the couple included an ample bedroom suite with its own generous en suite for the day they may need a live-in caretaker. Their housecleaner, liking what she sees, has playfully asked if they need a live-in now. Not just yet, say Barry and Brenda, but they know this addition will allow them to enjoy their home for years to come.

*Carolyn Heiman explores beautiful Victoria-area homes each month for Boulevard Magazine. Let her know about a gorgeous home you’d like to see profiled by contacting her at [cheiman@shaw.ca](mailto:cheiman@shaw.ca)*

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## SUPPLY LIST

**Contractor/Builder:** Terry Johal Developments Ltd.

**Interior/Exterior Design:** Barry/Brenda Hersh

**Cabinetry:** Island Dream Kitchens/Swiftsure Cabinets

**Countertops:** Colonial Countertops

**Drywall:** Andy’s Drywall

**Electrical:** Baldy Mountain Electrical

**Framing:** Martin Kuehn

**Landscaping:** Nu Lawns/Demitasse Nursery

**Painting:** Sheldon Dupont Painting

**Roofing:** Aerial Roofing

**Sound System:** Grohovac Installations

**Windows:** Westeck Windows

