

Rosedale home's indoor pool makes a splash

This stately stone home also boasts five bedrooms and a deep, treed lot



19 Whitney Ave., Toronto.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL PEART

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THE LISTING: 19 Whitney Ave., Toronto

LOT SIZE: 50- by 186-feet

AGENT: Janet Lindsay (Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd.)

The backstory



The indoor pool was a major selling point for the owners' children.

Just about nine years ago, Jill and Michael Burke were searching for a house with gracious rooms for entertaining and lots of room for three young boys when they found 19 Whitney Ave. in Toronto's Rosedale neighbourhood.

The circa-1927 house had five bedrooms, a stately stone façade and a deep, treed lot. They were both drawn to it immediately.

For the Burkes' three sons, the most exciting feature was the indoor swimming pool. Previous owners had built a rear addition with a vaulted ceiling, stone terrace and doors opening to the garden. The climate-controlled pool area is filled with light and warmth year-round, Ms. Burke says.

The renovated house also had a great room which combines a large kitchen, family room and breakfast area. Seven skylights bring light to the interior.

"Based on the layout of the home, we thought it was perfect for what we were looking for," Ms. Burke says. "It had such great flow."

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The house today



Light from a third-floor skylight fills the home's entrance atrium.

The Burkes made few changes once they moved into the 6,000-square-foot house, except to brighten the front entry by painting the dark, wooden doors and trim white, Ms. Burke says.

Guests arrive to a vestibule with a marble floor and traditional doors with leaded-glass windows. The atrium is open to the skylight three floors above.

"We opened it up even more by painting the entrance of the house. My husband loves the dark wood," she says, adding that she prefers a coat of white. I won that one. The light is fantastic."



The renovated house also had a great room which combines a large kitchen, family room and breakfast area.

The original house had a centre-hall plan with a formal living room overlooking the street on one side and a dining room on the other. The two rooms still stand, but the rear of the house was reconfigured to open up the back and create the great room overlooking the pool.

Over the years, the couple replaced some of the windows and updated the built-in appliances in the kitchen.

Upstairs, the home has a large master bedroom with a dressing room. The ensuite bathroom has a soaker tub, a walk-in shower and doors opening to a private balcony.

There are two other bedrooms on that floor and a den with a fireplace and light coming from windows on three sides. There's also a large family bathroom.

The third floor has two more bedrooms and one semi-ensuite bathroom.

On the lower level, the house has a recreation room, a temperature-controlled wine cellar and an additional bedroom.



The lower level of the home includes a climate-controlled wine cellar.

Ms. Burke says that having bedrooms and family rooms spread over various levels contributed to a harmonious household when the couple's three sons were living at home.

"They each had their own space or floor to go to."

Outside, the back garden provides a haven under the tall trees and evergreens, Ms. Burke says. The garden beds are planted with shrubs and perennials. There's a stone terrace and a pergola for shade.

"It's really relaxing and very private."



The dining room can easily accommodate parties of 12.

Ms. Burke says she and her husband have held many parties and large family gatherings over the years. The dining room easily accommodates 12 people for a formal dinner and there are lots of seating areas for larger gatherings.

"We've had up to 200 flowing through the house."

Ms. Burke says she and her husband are empty-nesters now, but they've made lots of happy memories in the home.

"We love the house," Ms. Burke says. "We've lived well in the house."



The master bedroom has a private dressing room.

Because the enclave of Rosedale is a heritage conservation district, homeowners cannot make major alterations to the exteriors of their houses. Real estate agent Janet Lindsay of Chestnut Park Real Estate Ltd. says the swimming pool extension could never be built today, but the 960-square-foot addition is within the rules because it was built before heritage regulations were put in place.



The ensuite bathroom has a soaker tub, a walk-in shower and doors opening to a private balcony.

She has plenty of ideas for new uses for the space if future owners aren't keen on having an indoor pool. The high ceilings could accommodate a dance and yoga studio or a basketball court, she says, and the plentiful windows make the space very suitable for an artist's studio, Muskoka room or solarium. There's enough length for a skating rink, a bowling alley or a billiards table, she adds.

Ms. Lindsay points out that Rosedale residents can walk to many of the city's top private and public schools. Whitney Avenue is steps from historic Chorley Park, which provides access to the area's ravines and hiking and cycling trails.

The best feature

The swimming pool has a stone surround that provides lots of space for lounging. Mr. Burke says his favourite spot in the house is the sitting area under the palm tree.

Both generations have had many parties in and around the pool over the years.

"It's a great social thing. We'll have the barbeque going and the doors open," Ms. Burke says. "It's quite funny – you're sitting under a palm tree in Toronto."

She says coming down for a solitary swim in the early morning is very calming.

"I love looking out at the green. When you're inside swimming, it's a private oasis."

In addition, the family members don't have to spend their time scooping leaves and twigs out of the water.

"The beauty of an indoor pool is, it's less maintenance – nothing falls into the pool."