

FAÇADE FACELIFTS

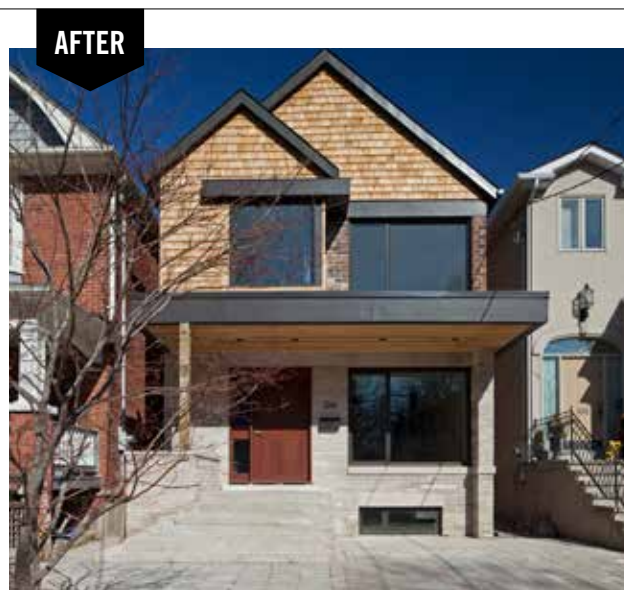


The exterior of your home reveals a lot about you. Make sure the message is a good one.

BY **BRENDAN CHARTERS**



Situated in a traditional neighbourhood, the owners wanted to differentiate their home by adding some contemporary flair, but not stick out like a sore thumb.



Architect Richard Librach designed a transitional structure featuring strong horizontal lines, but maintained a gable roof to tie in with other homes in the neighbourhood.

Just as the clothes you wear and the car you drive are an extension of who you are, so is the façade of your home. Curiously, a home's exterior is often not the driving force behind our design projects. Yet, each and every component contributes to the health and comfort of the homeowners, and they are critical to the longevity of the building.

When discussing a project with a client, it is my job to make sure that the façade becomes part of the renovation conversation. Typically, the topics outlined here are discussed.

Proportions

Ideally, heavier claddings are located below lighter ones (stone below siding, for example). Likewise, window and door proportions, should be considered in relation to wall massing (think of how disproportionate a tiny window seems amidst an expansive wall, for example). Roof slope ratios (ridge-to-wall height) will also greatly impact the way the home looks from the street. And, while contemporary structures often show more horizontal lines (appearing flatter), traditional rooflines are more elevated, featuring gable and hip-style roof structures.

Materials + Textures

These components are driven by the interaction of the various elements we apply as the exterior "skin" to the building. The skin guards against the elements that Mother Nature tosses at us. The materials and textures also define the real look of the home. For example, for a minor cost upgrade, laminated-style shingles provide more depth than the standard 3-tab asphalt type. They also increase the life expectancy of the roof.

With wall claddings, even when renovating, we try to link materials found on the surrounding buildings.

It is the orientation and use of those materials that make the façade interesting, not just the material itself.

Essentially, the building should fit in, albeit in a unique way, and not completely detract from its surroundings. The use of colour and texture draw focus to the features we want to emphasize, like the front entry. Conversely, taking the attention away from the parts we don't want people to focus on, such as the garage.

I suggest limiting your selections to two to three types of material, to avoid a tapestry effect, which occurs when you integrate too many products together. Likewise, a single material (i.e., brick) can become more interesting with laying patterns, like soldier courses or colour variation/integrations.

Maintenance

This is a big one. When the project is done, the home will naturally look amazing. It should remain so, as long as you maintain it, or for as long as the material can withstand Mother Nature, if you don't! Natural wood looks gorgeous, but composite materials may be the best option if you are not handy, or not invested in paying painters to return every couple of years. Clad windows are more durable than stained-wood windows, and stone or brick is more durable than siding.

Orientation

The position of the front façade in relation to the path of the sun and prevailing winds will impact its exposure to the elements. A south- or west-facing exterior will be impacted

more than a north- or east-facing one. Orientation also impacts the solar heat gain and the natural light entering your home through the windows.

It can also affect the choice of colours for cladding, and the depth of overhangs to compensate. Aspects like sun angles and light refraction can impact interior comfort and energy consumption, in all seasons; therefore, they should be taken into account when re-designing a façade.

Historical Significance

Every existing home was built in a specific era, and elements of the original design will reflect that time. A choice needs to be made to respect and preserve that (or a portion of it), or to deviate away from it.

It is common to blend a different

“Sun angles and light refraction can positively, or negatively, impact interior comfort levels and year-round energy consumption

BEFORE



The single clad stucco, shown here as it was originally built, was boring to the eye, offering no design appeal. In addition, the hip roof made the house seem smaller than it actually was.

AFTER



Focusing on three main materials for texture – Stonerex, James Hardie cement siding and cedar shakes – creates an interesting texture and colour equation.

architectural styling with another to create a “transitional” design. Modern elements applied to traditional buildings can be used to highlight the creative changes made, intentionally emphasizing the contrast.

If the building has elements that are intended to be restored, it is important to use the same materials, in the same fashion, to achieve the proper restoration. There are many examples of old Victorian homes whose painted pine porches have succumbed to rot only to be replaced with a pressure treated deck, a feature that certainly doesn't reflect the era!

Budget

Available funds will dictate whether the façade renovation is just a fresh coat of paint, or a complete re-build. New cladding costs range from natural stone as the most expensive, to brick and manufactured veneer stone, to pre-finished or pre-treated wood or composite siding, down to aluminum and vinyl-siding products.

Cost-effective changes that make a big impact on curb appeal include replacing/repairing rotten finishes and painting them with a new colour palette. Altering window and door colours, along with new prefinished-aluminum soffit, fascia and eavestroughs, will freshen up things and keep the finishes free from weather decay.

If the budget will allow for full façade changes, my recommendation would be to stick with more natural products. They tend to stand the test of time (as it relates to style) better than something manmade. If you think of manufactured veneer stones from the 1970s and '80s, they date themselves very easily. A stone veneer made from a natural stone will not be subjected to the whims of fashion quite the same way, though it will cost more to clad your home.

At Eurodale, we welcome these types of projects because it brings the neighbours together as they talk about the changes taking shape, and we get to show off a bit, too. Most important, though, is that the homeowners experience a renewed sense of pride as they leave their home and return each day, knowing their home is a true reflection of their good taste.

BEFORE



The predominately white and pastel blue façade looked faded and dull.

AFTER



New windows and doors, a new raised planter and front porch inject colour and contrast for a refreshed aesthetic at a budget price.

Brendan Charters is Development Manager of Toronto design-build firm Eurodale Developments – 2011 BILD Renovator of the Year. For more information, call 416.782.5690 or visit eurodale.ca.