

Last Sunday, I had the honour of escorting a group of people through some of the older homes in my uphill neighbourhood as part of Touchstone's Heritage Home Tour. The houses were between 80 and 105 years old. They all had good bones, great stories, generous homeowners and, above all, heart—the qualities that allow older architecture to survive and, indeed, thrive through generations.

It takes a little extra TLC to care for an older home. Homeowners who choose these houses take their responsibilities seriously, respecting the integrity of their properties while not over romanticizing the term 'heritage' at the expense of their own lifestyles.

To bring these houses into the 21st century most of the houses have undergone renovations. Since we no longer rely on fireplaces to heat one room at a time, many interior walls have been removed to allow freer flowing layouts and to let in more natural light. Most of the homes have updated windows, plumbing and wiring. Depending on the decade, woodwork has been stripped, painted, lacquered, replaced and even, on occasion, simulated—*faux* beams, for example—to reflect the aesthetics of the time.

One of the houses we viewed was a testament to all things green. When refitting the kitchen, the owners used recycled and pre-loved wood and an extraordinary countertop formed out of a material called 'Squak Mountain Stone'—a compressed mix of recycled paper, glass and cement that resembles limestone.

In another home, an antique-looking kitchen cooker turned out to be as digital as any modern top-of-the-line appliance and the modern refrigerator was housed in a chubby retro-style cabinet.

Thanks to all of you who let us look around. We came away inspired and reassured knowing that under responsible stewardship the old, the new and the something-in-between can happily co-exist under one roof.