

January 2019

# Neighbours of **GLENORA**

An exclusive magazine serving the  
neighbours of Glenora, Crestwood,  
Parkview, & Laurier Heights

*Karla Billey*  
**A Credit to  
Crestwood**



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Cover photo by Paula Gerein



# Karla Billey

## Design Maverick and a Credit to Crestwood

By Alaina Pascoe | Photos by Paula Gerein

Karla Billey is always on the go. To put it simply, she's a project oriented person and that is reflected in every aspect of her life. As the owner of Karla Billey Designs, she's never afraid to dig in and beautify the world around her. The stereotype of pretentious designer definitely doesn't apply to Karla; she's warm, funny and has just the right mixture of humility and confidence.

She grew up in Sherwood Park, to a hard working, single mother. Which meant from the get-go if she wanted something, she had to go out and get it herself. She worked her way through University, eventually completing her degree in Home Economics - graduating with distinction, no less.

Karla and her husband Brent, live in Crestwood, in a mid-century bungalow with expansive windows. She chuckles, "we live in what people call the see-through house." Before setting up shop in Crestwood, Karla and Brent gutted a home in Altendale, and lived the suburban lifestyle in Terwillegar. Though there were benefits to living in the 'burbs, after half a decade, they decided that the storied character homes of central Edmonton was the something missing

in their lives. "You can't beat living centrally," Karla insists, "especially considering the fact that now I have such a painless commute to my office in the Brewery District."

She asserts, "we wanted to live in a bungalow, and we both decided that this was it for us pretty quickly after we came across our current home which we immediately fell in love with." The fact that it's a hop, skip and a jump from many of the city's picturesque walking trails makes it perfectly suitable for them. "I wouldn't change a thing about this house, I love footprint of it."

Nature is an important part of Karla's life, and what she coins the sleepy "grandfather trees" of Crestwood that frame the homes in her neighbourhood are something that Karla and Brent value beyond measure. Karla says that one of the other major reasons she lives in the neighbourhood is the accessibility of walking trails. "The River Valley is the place I find a lot of my inspiration." The rustic colours of fall are especially inspiring she says, "I also have a background in fine arts and the lush colours are something that definitely still drive me to pick up a paintbrush, when I have the time."

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Our conversation quickly turned back to Crestwood, and Karla insists that from a design standpoint, many of the original bungalows of her neighbourhood were built so solidly they're standing the test of time. Professionally, Karla is remarkably versatile in her approach to redressing the homes of her clients, and the Billey's personal style echoes her professional design strategy. She describes it as, "mid century modern which perfectly suits the aesthetic of our home." Karla further jokes that local treasure, Lucy the Elephant could stand on the floors of their home and they would not buckle.



"We just adore the airiness of our home and I married both contemporary pieces with traditional, which also echoes the style of the area, old meets new." She always encourages her clients to work with what they have, and she took her own advice and elegantly implemented some new, innovative design ideas while still retaining parts of their home that have stood the test of time. Karla underscores that the best design works with what you have and doesn't alienate heirlooms and tradition.

Karla and Brent are also self confessed foodies, and the gastronomic gems of the area are certainly not lost on them. As a small business owner, she is an avid supporter of local restaurants, and counts Tasty Tomato and the newly minted Rebel Food and Drink as some of their favorites

Her kind heart always bubbling with creativity and her desire to embrace the natural beauty of the area, and in turn encouraging others to do the same, makes her a champion of the community. Her impressive design career may have made her notable figure in the local interior design circuit, but her emphasis on preserving the original design of the neighbourhood, makes Karla a credit to Crestwood.

Do you know a neighbour who has a story to share?

Nominate your neighbour to be featured in one of our upcoming issues!  
Contact us at [apascoe@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:apascoe@bestversionmedia.com)

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# Karla Billey and Alaina Talk Owning a Small Business: Words of the Wise from 2 Small Business Owner

By Alaina Pascoe

During my interview with Karla Billey, owner and operator of Karla Billey Designs, our conversation quickly turned to the trials and tribulations of being independently employed. She had such sage insights into the world of professional independence, especially in the creative sector, that I decided to include some of her best advice...

1. **Start Small:** Don't be scared to start from the bottom and work your way up. Karla says, "one of my first jobs was with Ethan Allen and it was formative. My role may have lacked prestige, but I learned the tricks of the trade and it was a great basis for my own company."
2. **Test the Waters:** "When you're first starting up your own business, you can't afford to be picky and it's good to get a broad spectrum of experience. Not being able to afford to say no is a good thing. Experience is the spice of life."
3. **Be patient and learn from mistakes:** "It isn't a question of if you'll make mistakes, it's when." She further underscores that mistakes are an integral part of the learning process and no one is immune to them.

4. **Find Your People:** You cannot please everyone, and not everyone is your client. Karla insists, "one of the adventures of building a client base is finding clients that you simply jive with. Being at a point in a relationship where the client allows you the freedom to deem what would serve them best, is ideal."
5. **Confidence is key:** as a local tastemaker Karla knows the importance of being confident in her aesthetic, "the best thing you can do as a creative professional is to be confident in your skills. Go with your gut and do what you love."

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