

# FAMILIES GROW-UP AND OUT

## Additions; Old Homes' Large Lots Allow For Expansion

**Denise Deveau – National Post**

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Growing families need their space -- and harried adults need their sanctuary. For some, finding both in an extremely hectic world is a matter of working with what you have and making it more than the sum of its parts.

The Nashes found their dream location on a quiet, wooded street in the Yonge and Lawrence area. While the site was everything they had hoped for, the house was far from an ideal fit for a family of three children and two professionals who work from home. In their minds, it was simply a matter of adding the space they wanted in a style that would speak to their individual tastes.

"With each child, we had given up an office in our old home," says radiologist Stephen Nash. "We had simply outgrown it. When this other house came up, we bought it sight unseen with the intention of renovating."

The newly purchased house was a typical North Toronto three-bedroom home with one bathroom, limited space for kids and a small kitchen. The major appeal was the unusually large, deep wooded lot, which offered endless potential -- and space -- for an addition worthy of the family's dreams.

Today, the house boasts an impressive 1,600-square-foot, two-storey addition that provides a magnificent view of a sylvan backyard scene. Architect Richard Librach provided the inspiration for the project, which combines lofty spaces with a country setting, look and feel. "We wanted to create a warm, friendly home that provided a welcoming atmosphere for friends and family," explains Mr. Librach.

The deep property offered the opportunity to create an expansive facade for watching children play and absorbing the secluded surroundings. Natural materials such as cedar shingles are repeated on the front and back exterior walls, and express the personality of the interior, where granite, marble and maple finishes are used throughout --from the kitchen to the spa-themed bathroom.

The barrel-vaulted-style extension and cathedral ceilings create added space for the family's living and sleeping quarters. Custom-designed upper-floor windows are arced to mirror the curved rooflines. "We can lie in bed and see the tops of trees," says Mr. Nash. "It's like country living in the city."

A playful porthole window theme is repeated throughout the house, including on doors and the custom-designed staircase. On each side of the bedroom are symmetrical spaces for the bathroom and an art studio for Ms. Nash. For added inspiration, ceilings were designed to slope upward from the front to a soaring 15 feet at the back.

The large bow window on the main floor accommodates a spacious eat-in kitchen, which overlooks a separate family room. Glass pocket doors close off the latter without really disrupting the open concept. For the parents, this room with a view gives a clear sightline to their kids' goings-on without the distractions of noisy television and games. Finding the signature style that suits the individual family is about "trying to redirect people away from appropriating other solutions and focusing on the issues that relate to their living patterns, personal collections and rituals," says Mr. Librach. "Sometimes it doesn't happen early in the process, and it's not always predictable."

A quintessential example was an addition project for the Nudlers in North Toronto, where the "introduction was written at the end," as Mr. Librach puts it. That turned out to be a front-entrance tower built from Tyndall stone -- a limestone used in municipal buildings in Winnipeg, Marla Nudler's hometown. "Nothing felt right until we came across that stone," says Mr. Librach. "That's what made the connection."

Connecting with their personal expression was not a problem for Francis and Gwen Mason, who recently expanded their 1920s Georgian-style house in the Yonge and Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. According to Ms. Mason, with two young kids and limited kitchen space, it was all getting a little too cozy. "The eat-in space was quite small. We had maybe three feet of clearance around the counter. And the tongue-and-groove flooring was becoming a major food accumulator."

The Masons debated at length over whether to add a family room, kitchen or formal dining area. The ultimate choice was to incorporate all three into one open, brightly lit room that would become a social centre for family and guests.

"We wanted a bigger kitchen and family room, as well as a space where we could entertain guests or simply sit down and have a glass of wine in front of a fireplace," says Mr. Mason. "We certainly didn't want a typical TV/family room."

The new 30x17-ft. addition created by Gow Hastings Architects, designer Brian Gluckstein, contractor **G. COLUCCI & SONS LTD.**, is all about light and space, featuring floor-to-ceiling windows, expansive french doors and a vaulted open-concept ceiling. The new addition, which has been artfully rendered to match the exterior of the existing building, extends to the back of the garage to blend seamlessly with the contemporary outdoor landscaping.

The intent of the overall design was to create a contemporary look and feel while having a space that fit with the Masons' penchant for antique furnishings and comfy chairs and sofas. White marble accents in the kitchen are paired with traditional wood finishes for the cupboards to emulate a European bistro feel that exudes warmth and hospitality.

The focal point of the entire space is a simple but elegant wood-burning fireplace built of a limestone composite. That, says Mr. Mason, was their crowning achievement and well worth the extra investment. "The difference between a wood-burning versus a natural gas fireplace is huge because the chimney requirements are so different. I'd say it added \$20,000 to the cost of the fireplace, but it was a must-have for us."

He adds that light was also a very important consideration. "The way the room is situated allows for a lot of early morning light. With the windows and the vaulted ceiling, it seems to be lit up all day. We love it."