



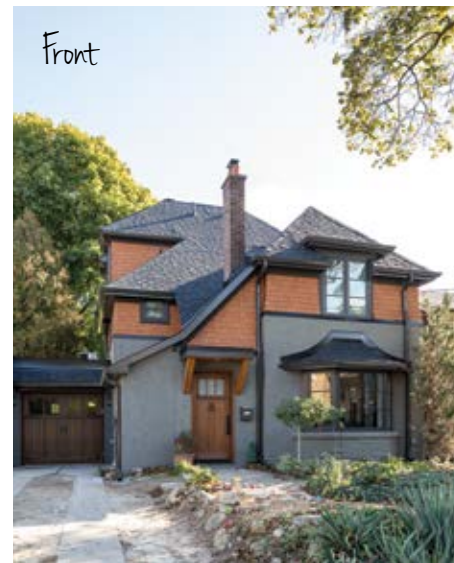
STORY MELISSA CAMPEAU | PHOTOGRAPHY JASON HARTOG

TREEHOUSE IN THE CITY

"BEFORE THE RENOVATION, WE USED TO CRAWL UP ON THE ROOF WITH THE KIDS TO WATCH THE FIREWORKS," SAYS SHARON MITTMANN OF HER RECENTLY OVERHAULED SWANSEA HOME.



LEFT: The third floor loft and deck is a serene place to relax or take in the breathtaking vistas of the yard and water. **BELOW:** The original exterior style, dubbed the Hansel and Gretel house by homeowner Sean MacCormack, was preserved but clad with newer, more modern product. **BOTTOM:** The three-storey addition blends seamlessly with the home's original silhouette. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Sharon bought sofas that can be moved around, and says the kids often shift the furniture when they're hanging with friends, watching someone cook or just relaxing and chatting. **BOTTOM:** Views to the outdoors make for an oasis in the city.



Front



Back

Bordering High Park and set among trees and a gently sloping hill, the view from the roof is spectacular. It does, however, have its drawbacks. "Those asphalt shingles are pretty hot in the summer!" says Sharon, with a laugh.

Five years ago, Sharon, her husband Sean MacCormack and their two children, now 13 and 15, bought the two-storey home in the family-friendly neighbourhood on the west side, but waited a few years to change anything. "I'm a firm believer that you have to live in a house for a while and experience it before you can renovate," says Sharon.

After a few summers of rooftop campouts to catch the CNE air show and Canada Day fireworks, they knew a third floor with a sizeable deck made sense. A three-storey addition on the back of the house with ample windows seemed the best way to add a little living space and enjoy the lush green of their backyard.

To turn their plans into reality, Sharon hired **Joe Gatti** of **The Gatti Group**. "We were there just over a year," says Joe. "We built the three-storey addition, gutted the whole interior and worked on the exterior – basically gave the family a new house."

While there's plenty to love about the redesigned home, Joe has a soft spot for the third-floor loft and its deck, overlooking the yard and the water. "It's so serene up there, it's just beautiful," says Joe.

"We use that room for all kinds of things," says Sharon. "Sometimes it's the recovery room, for example. Just yesterday, my daughter was home with a cold so she stayed up there in bed and watched TV. It's also a good spot if you just want to be alone for a bit." She adds, with a laugh, "We also call it the anti-snoring room and it's a handy spot if anyone needs a good night's sleep."

While the third floor is a popular hideout, the open-concept kitchen and living area on the main floor is where the family spends most of their time – and that's very much by design.

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Doors fold away, blending the line between interior and exterior living.





RIGHT: A cosy living room at the front of the home extends the main floor's seating area. **BELOW:** The entranceway was enlarged to accommodate more traffic. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** The family loves the blue island and its contrast to the main floor's other elements. **BOTTOM:** The family frequently hosts gatherings, and the large craftsman-style table accommodates plenty of people.



"The centre of a home's universe is always the kitchen," says Sharon. Before the renovation, the first floor was split into two distinct areas: one part for the dining and living rooms, and the other for the kitchen and sunroom. "When it came time to renovate, I knew I wanted a big room where everyone would want to congregate."

The new kitchen with counters from **Granitec Inc.** is a home cook's dream. "Sean is a great cook, so I wanted to have a sofa near the kitchen, she says. "We made it more of a theatre kind of feel, so I can have a glass of wine with company and watch him cook."

Sharon's goal was to have the family spend their free time together in a relaxed, comfortable space. "We kept the bedrooms fairly small," she says. "The kids do have desks in their rooms but they always migrate down here, and I love that. It's a great way to keep the family talking."

Vintage wood floors from **Value Wood Floors Limited**, wood-grain tile from **Weston Tile** and quartz countertops keep the area low-maintenance and family-friendly.

Skylights from Velux and plenty of windows from Ridley Windows & Doors Inc. brighten the kitchen, as do the folding doors off the back of the house. "That really does bring the outside in," says Sharon. "In the summer we open those doors as soon as we get up, and then you lie on the couch and feel like you're outside."

Just past the folding doors is a new deck. "That was part of my husband's wish list with the renovation," she explains. "In addition to the air-show deck on the third storey, he wanted a deck in the yard because he likes to sit in the trees."

That deck – as well as the addition it's attached to – is the result of a whole lot of effort and determination.

"It took me about three years to get through the city process," says Sharon, who navigated a maze of approvals, a geotechnical study, a ravine bylaw and more. *Continued on page 72*





Once the path was cleared of red tape, other challenges cropped up. “That whole area is basically infill with sand, not dirt,” says Joe. “When you excavate, sand just keeps piling in. So we needed to involve a structural engineer. That whole section needed to be shored with concrete and steel beams.” He adds, “It was a massive, expensive undertaking and that was before we even started building any of the addition.” Another obstacle? Getting equipment in to actually do the work. “In order to get machinery to the backyard, we needed to take down 80 per cent of the garage roof.”

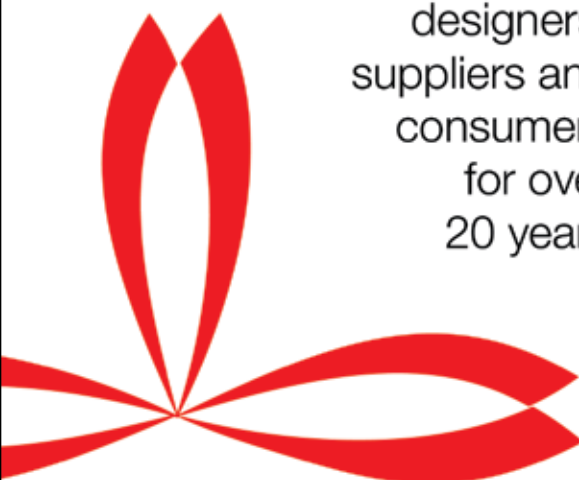
The end result is a garden oasis in the city. “There’s a Frank Lloyd Wright feel to that part of the house, where you’ve got nature blending in with new materials,” says Joe. “And the backyard – you don’t see a lot of that in the city. Their landscape itself has two or three tiers and then a deck that overlooks those levels.”

“Our friends call it our treehouse,” says Sharon. “We tend to think of it as our cottage in the city.” It took a while to happen, she admits, but it was a transformation worth the wait. “I’m never leaving this house,” she says with a laugh. “We absolutely love it here, and now with the renovation it really feels like home.” **OH**



ABOVE: The master bedroom looks onto the tranquil wooded yard.
LEFT: The bathroom blends old school lighting with fresh, modern tilework.

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