MANSION GLOBAL

REBUILDS & RENOS

The Neighbors Had Strong Opinions. So Did the Accountant Who Expanded This 1936 Toronto Bungalow.

A couple took a methodical approach to converting their little home in the city's Swansea neighborhood into a three-story house

BY REBECCA BRATBURD Follow | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED APRIL 30, 2026, 5:00 AM EDT | MANSION GLOBAL



A Toronto couple converted their 1936 bungalow with a 1,500-square-foot expansion.
NIAMH BARRY (3)

Opinions can run strong in areas rich in architectural heritage.

Knowing that, Anya and Jyotin Handa, canvassed their Toronto neighborhood before breaking ground on their 1936 bungalow conversion.

Jyotin, an accountant, and his wife, Anya, who works in insurance, lived in the home for five years before embarking on the renovation and expansion. They bought the house knowing the neighborhood, Swansea, was where Anya had always wanted to be: tree-lined streets, proximity to High Park, and close enough to the water and the subway.

Average home prices in the enclave have consistently exceeded C$2 million (US$1.46 million), and anything two stories or recently remodeled was out of their price range, Jyotin said. So, they settled on the 1,000-square-foot bungalow with plans to one day expand it to accommodate their growing family.



The house spanned only 1,000 square feet when the Handas bought it.
Courtesy of Dart Studio (3)

Residents in Swansea have no final say in projects like this, but they could make construction difficult through the Committee of Adjustment, a government body that approves changes to buildings, Jyotin said.

A homeowner just up the street had faced such opposition during construction, and their advice, Jyotin said, was direct: Talk to your neighbors before you go too far.

What residents cared about most was historical retention, he said. Nearly every original home in Swansea dates to the 1930s, and the decades of conversions had produced mixed results.

"Some fit in well; some you look at and think, really?" Jyotin said.

Olivia Botrie, a principal at Dart Design Build, who the Handas hired for the 1,500-square-foot expansion, shared that concern.

"On that street, a lot of people have topped-up bungalows, and so many of them literally look like someone just stuck something on top," she said. "We kept the peaked ceiling on the third floor and tracked in details from the original architecture. There are some two- and three-story houses on the street that are original, so we worked with that context."

The Handas' determination also drove them to scour multiple brickyards for the gray they wanted.

"If you spend any time with bricks, you know that gray is almost an impossible color to solve for," Jyotin said. "You can do a suburban whitewashed gray with painted bricks, or go for a lighter aesthetic, but then the mix of bricks and the wrong mortar in different lighting just doesn't look right."

The bricks they chose shift in tone with the light, Jyotin said, reading as brown on overcast days and smoky gray in full sun. He insisted the brick wrap the entire structure, not just the front facade.

“I didn’t want a nice front with stucco running down the sides and back,” he said. “It costs more, but we put the money into bricking it all the way through.”



The living room.
Niamh Barry



In the dining room, panel detailing on one wall adds visual interest.
Composite: Courtesy of Dart Studio; Niamh Barry

Inside, the renovation was a complete rebuild. The design team preserved only the finished basement and one exterior wall, kept for zoning reasons, as removing it would have required insetting the structure by nearly a meter, Botrie said.

The interior direction was modern but warm, Botrie said, with natural materials, clean lines, no traditional molding and black windows for contrast. Adding square footage was the primary driver, she said, but the third floor, which functions as an office, guest bathroom and guest lounge, kept its peaked ceiling rather than gaining area under a flat roof.

The project finished in nine months, ahead of the builder's estimate of 10 to 14, Jyotin said.

The kitchen anchors the main floor, its fluted wood island and matching range hood setting the material tone for the rest of the house, Botrie said. Two-tone cabinetry, warm wood below and painted white above, runs along the perimeter and a stone backsplash backs the range.

"The island detail is so good. I'm obsessed with it," said Mariane Kawamura, a senior designer from Dart Studio who worked on the home. "We have a very warm kitchen, which is something I really aim for. Wood used in interesting ways keeps something very contemporary from going stark."

Next to the kitchen, a tufted leather banquette faces a black-framed window looking onto the backyard and the ravine beyond. A beverage station tucked near the back door, with open shelving above, serves as a landing spot for entertaining in and out of the yard, Botrie said. In the dining room, panel detailing on one wall adds visual interest without straying into traditional aesthetics and a sculptural black chandelier hangs above a live-edge wood table.



The kitchen anchors the main floor, its fluted wood island and matching range hood setting the material tone for the rest of the house,

Niamh Barry



Next to the kitchen, a tufted leather banquette faces a black-framed window looking onto the backyard and the ravine beyond.

Niamh Barry



A beverage station tucked near the back door, with open shelving above, serves as a landing spot for entertaining in and out of the yard.

Niamh Barry



The fireplace column runs floor to ceiling in a warm, sandy microcement finish.
Niamh Barry

The fireplace column runs floor to ceiling in a warm sandy tone with subtle variation across its surface. This was done in microcement, a thin product applied like plaster that reads almost like lime wash, Botrie said.

Upstairs, the primary bedroom was the room that the couple had waited years to have, Jyotin said. "We never had an en suite, never had proper closets," he said. Big windows look down into the backyard and the ravine forested with trees.

"You open the curtains in the morning and it's very peaceful," Jyotin said.

He offered more insight into the home's transformation.

The one tip we'd offer to someone undertaking a renovation is... Take your time. You can get too excited and dragged down in the details. Our process was multiyear. You never want to rush into a project this large and have regrets. And you really find out what kind of couple you are going through something like this. There are disagreements, and you have to make sure you're compromising in the right areas and aligned as a family before you get too far in.



The primary bedroom.

Niamh Barry



The owners looked forward to having a primary bedroom with a luxurious en suite bathroom.

Niamh Barry (3)

My favorite material we used during the process is... The exterior brick, without question. For Anya, I'd say anything in the kitchen—the wooden accents on the island and the vent hood, the two-tone cabinets.

The one expense we didn't expect was... The one change after move-in was the porch. The original design had composite wood decking, but once we were living with it, it was creaky, water pooled on it and it got slippery when wet. We ended up replacing it with stone when we did the landscaping. Not a major expense in the grand scheme, but it was something we changed after the fact.

The renovation ended up costing... C$1.1 million to C$1.2 million, excluding landscaping.