

# Living next to a renovation — you could be next

By TERRY MILLS

Maybe it will start a couple of blocks up the street — so far up, you hardly notice it. Somebody has a dumpster on his lawn and is apparently tearing all the insides out of his house.

Then it moves a little closer. The guy across the street wants to put an addition on the back of his house. You get a notice about it from your local Committee of Adjustments asking if you object.

Object? Of course not. Everybody knows that house is way too small.

But now you find that your next-door neighbour is at it too and not just a little bit. He wants a two-storey addition, a pool and a patio. The job will last for months. So will the dust, the noise, the tradesmen tramping in and out. To top it all off, he wants you to let the back hoe cross your yard — down the middle of your prize peony bed — to dig the

pool. He promises to pay for any damage.

I know the feeling. I once had a next-door neighbour doing renovations and I thought I'd be the perfect gentlemen. I let the tradesmen park in my driveway — until one night I saw one of them drive across my lawn to get out.

In the long run, of course, renovations are good for a neighbourhood. As they did in Toronto's Cabbagetown, they can change the whole character of an area. It can mean the rejuvenation of a neighbourhood and that's exciting for everyone. Economically, it will improve property values and help make the area more desirable.

There are ways to minimize the pain and maximize the gain.

□ Be as friendly and accommodating as possible. After all, you know that someday you might be asking your neighbour to approve renovations of your own.

□ Be pleasant to the tradesmen. This may be your opportunity to pick off a plumber or electrician to take care of a few jobs around the house while they're in the neighbourhood.

□ Make a point of finding out exactly what work is being done and what, if any, impact it may have on your property. Contractors are usually eager to have on their side.

□ Keep an eye on the contractor. If he does a good job next door, you may want him to work on your house.

□ Realize that if you're being disrupted by the construction next door, your neighbour is suffering even more. Invite him over for dinner. You may be able to learn from his experience.

□ Express yourself. Your neighbour may not realize how badly your life is being disturbed by his construction. He may be able to find ways to help.

□ Keep your windows closed during construction.

If you're the renovating homeowner, you can help to keep your neighbours' aggravation to a minimum.

□ Let them know exactly what you're

doing. Introduce your contractor and allow him to answer neighbours' questions.

□ Show consideration for your neighbours. Ask permission to cross their property if necessary. See that debris — such as nails or shingles — is picked up if it falls on your neighbour's lot.

□ Be informed. The Toronto Home Builders' Association Renovation and Redevelopment Council has a brochure available on the best ways of carrying out renovations. It also offers a brochure on infill development. You can obtain them by calling the THBA's Housing Information Line — 391-HOME.

□ Make sure that you have supplied your contractor with electricity and water so that

he doesn't help himself to your neighbour's hose or outdoor plug. At the same time, be certain that your contractor has checked the location of all underground pipes and cables. There is nothing like the wrath of a neighbour deprived of electricity at supper time or water on laundry day.

□ Be patient. The neighbour who is kicking up a fuss now may be at your door with a sheepish grin on his face two years hence when he decides to do some renovating.

And remember, giving a house new life is a long process but it's also exciting. It can be like helping with the rebirth of an entire city.

□ Terry Mills is the chairman of the renovation and redevelopment council of the Toronto Home Builders' Association.

## Try built-in furniture

# Creating more space in your home isn't difficult

Many homeowners lack adequate storage space in their homes. However, there are many ways to enhance, modify, and re-arrange space within the existing framework of a home without resorting to expensive structural alterations.

The arrangement of furniture in a room, or the size of the pieces, can make an adequately sized room feel cramped and uncomfortable.

By using some interior design principles, such as eliminating unnecessary pieces or using furniture whose scale fits the size of the room, you can renew your living space.

Try to arrange the furniture into functional groupings, centered on the nature of the activities and keep traffic paths clear.

### Built-in furniture

In tight or awkwardly shaped rooms, consider using built-in furniture. While built-ins lack the flexibility and mobility of freestanding pieces, they can be tailored to fit the dimensions of a room.

Built-in furniture can make the most of the space around or below windows, in small niches or alcoves, in closets, or in between wall studs. Built-in seating can serve a double purpose by providing table tops and storage space. In converted attics, the space beneath the roof along the eaves can be fitted with built-in storage, desk space, or a day bed for lounging.

Properly designed storage can help organize your belongings, and leave more room for activities and furnishings.

To begin planning the storage for your home, first eliminate items you don't use. Reserve articles that are used only once a month for filling hard-to-reach storage spaces, back of shelves or awkward corners of cabinets. Keep frequently used items close at hand, within your reach.

Once you have an idea of how much storage you need, and where you need it, consider the different types of storage. Storage can be classified into two major categories; open and closed. Open shelving systems and wall units are ideal for displaying art objects, memorabilia, and collections.

Closed storage, such as closets, cabinets, and drawers is useful for concealing items which tend to be cluttered or visually unattractive. Closed storage is also useful where dust is a problem, and cleaning is to be kept to a minimum.

### Storage facilities

Whether open or closed, a storage unit can be moveable or built-in a room. Moveable units can be freestanding pieces of furniture, or modular units which stack or interlock to form various configurations. Modular units are desirable if you anticipate changes in a room's use.

Built-in storage, on the other hand, can make use of a room's awkward spaces, blend in with a room's walls, or be custom-fitted for the size and proportion of the items to be stored.

You can also increase your storage space by re-organizing your closets, building or buying drawers and cabinets. Most closets in homes come minimally equipped with a single clothes pole and a top shelf. If planned properly, closets can be re-organized and fitted with additional shelves, drawers or cabinets. If you convert a bedroom into a study or workroom, its closet can be converted into a library, desk/work area, or sewing centre.

There are many types of stock cabinets, of wood or metal, prefinished or unfinished, which can be bought and installed by the homeowners.

Typical cabinet designs are pantries, wardrobes, modular wall units for studios or offices. Cabinets are upright storage units which often contain shelving, drawers and open compartments. Although their contents can be open to view, cabinets generally have door fronts to conceal their interior.

Whatever your storage requirements, there are a host of options available on the market to homeowners. With a little careful planning, you can make a room more aesthetically pleasing as well as create a more comfortable living space.

□ This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

## Has your air conditioner been put to bed?

As fall leaves the land, it's important to properly bed down your central air conditioner, or window air conditioners.

Rose Titus, spokesperson for ICG, Canada's Largest heating and conditioning manufacturer, sends the following information and suggestions.

First of all, says Ms. Titus, resist the temptation to run air conditioners in cool weather to exhaust stale or smoky air. An air conditioner should not run when it's below 13C (55F) outside. This can damage the compressor.

With your central system it's important to clean up the outside unit. This involves brushing away grass clippings and deadfall from trees, and washing the unit with your garden hose. This latter step is especially important, particularly if there are any wandering dogs in your neighbourhood. Dog urine is highly corrosive.

You can cover the unit if you like. It doesn't require any protection from the weather, but if there's a possibility of ice-covered tree branches falling on it, it's wise to take safety measures.

If you do cover it, make sure the cover does not hang right to the ground. It's extremely important that air be allowed to circulate under the cover. Otherwise humidity will condense inside the unit and could drastically shorten its life.

Window units are weatherproof. There's no need to protect them. However there is a need to protect yourself from the drafts they can let in which will increase your fuel bill.

It's preferable, if possible, to remove the unit from the window and install the storm window.

If that can't be done, place a piece of cardboard between the inside cover and the fins (the cover is easily removeable for this purpose).

Also, wrap old towelling or a piece of an old shower curtain around the unit inside. The objective is to shut off air leakage in the space between the air conditioner and the window frame.

Take these simple steps and your air conditioner will be ready to serve you well when summer comes again.

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