

LANEWAY LORE

WHEN BUILDING A LANEWAY HOUSE DON'T THINK IN TERMS OF PRICE PER SQUARE FOOT, ADVISES BUILDER RANJ MAHAL



PREVIOUS PAGE: Sharon and Rick McNeill took advantage of a Vancouver house tour to shop for a builder for their laneway home. ABOVE: The second-floor bedroom is large enough that the McNeills didn't have to compromise on furniture size. OPPOSITE PAGE: The glass-enclosed staircase connecting the two floors adds drama without blocking sight lines.

Story JANE MUNDY Photos URBAN LANE HOMES



hen Sharon and Rick McNeill shopped for a laneway home in 2012 via a laneway house tour with the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, they decided on a house by Urban Lanehomes. "First, it was the only home on a 33-foot lot, and we loved the design," says Sharon. The McNeills saw several laneway houses on the tour, but they were sold on Urban Lanehomes' design for a number of reasons.

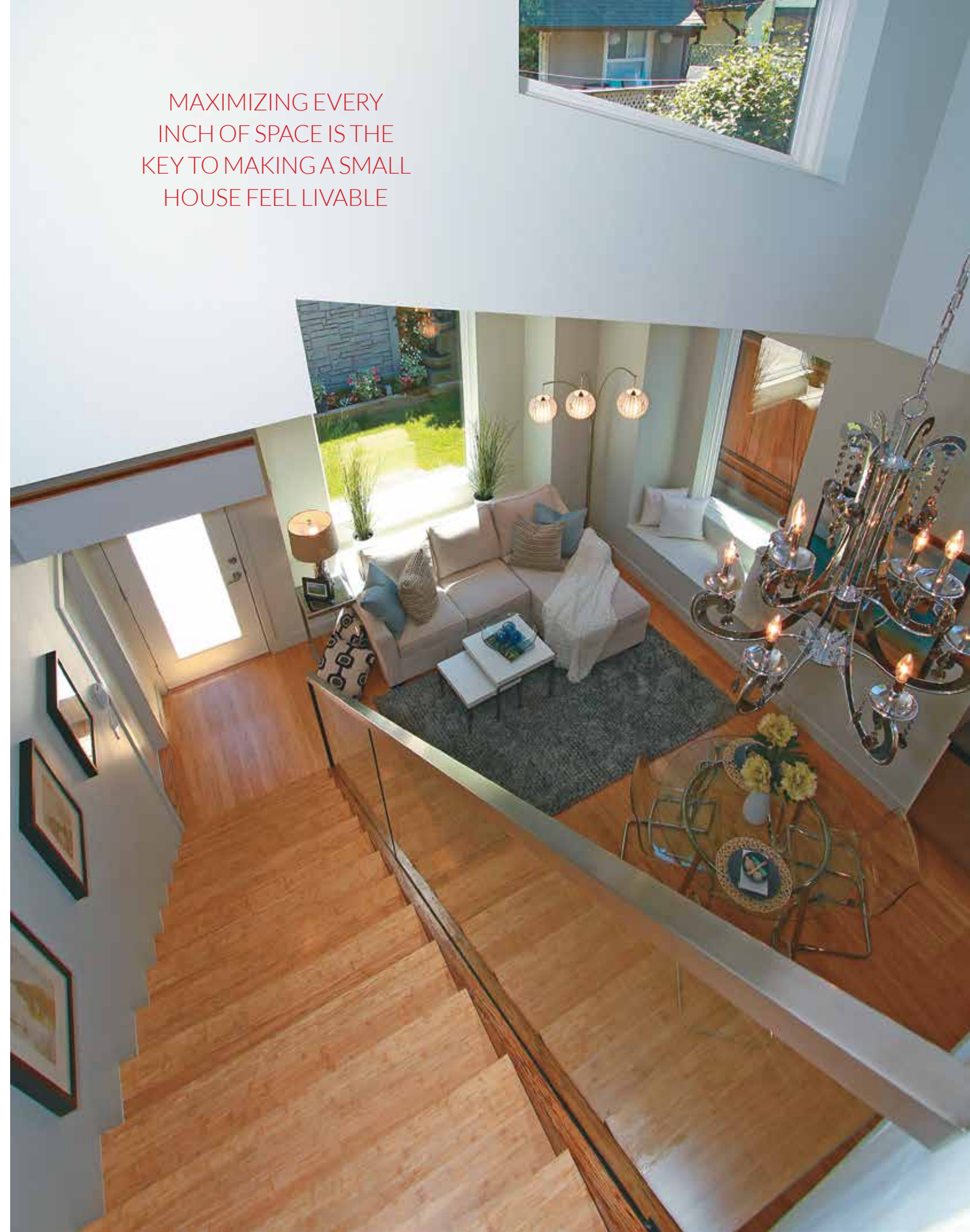
"Right away we noticed lots of big windows and first-class finishing. The tall ceiling and glass staircase gave the illusion of more space," says Rick, "so we negotiated a

reasonable price with Ranj Mahal of Urban Lanehomes and started." Rick McNeill says they are almost on budget and on time.

Almost everyone's first question when considering a laneway home is how big they can build; the second is how much that will cost. Before Mahal answers, he advises prospective clients to walk through one of his company's homes first and guess the size. Most people get it wrong.

I walked through the McNeill house and guessed 700 square feet, even after living in my 1,000-square-foot laneway home for a few months. The living space is 498 square feet with an 80-square-foot balcony and a 190-square-foot garage, on a 122-by-33 foot lot. Including fixtures and landscaping, it costs about \$300,000, which seems to be the going rate.

MAXIMIZING EVERY INCH OF SPACE IS THE KEY TO MAKING A SMALL HOUSE FEEL LIVABLE





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Bamboo floors throughout the house have radiant heat underneath.

The faux stone material used for exterior walls is maintenance-free.

A glass front door lets light into the home.

White cabinets, walls and fixtures in the kitchen and bathroom keep things airy.

A recycled wood beam adds visual interest to the staircase.

Cedar soffits create a polished look outside.

OPPOSITE PAGE:

A huge second-storey window floods the McNeill home with light, while a chandelier suspended from the 18-foot ceiling adds a note of drama.



If you're considering a laneway house, Mahal advises you not to think in terms of price per square foot any more. For instance, my laneway house is double the square footage of the McNeills' with about the same price tag. "Lots of hard costs are transferred into square footage," Mahal explains. "City permits and excavating both cost about \$30,000 each, regardless of the house size." Every inch counts in a small space and so does the utilization of space. "Our crews, from framers to landscapers, know exactly what they are doing."

It shows. Outside, cedar soffits are added for esthetics. Even the drainage and gutters are hidden from view. Inside, a chandelier suspended from the 18-foot ceiling and open staircase leading to the upstairs bedroom and bathroom add drama. Large windows throughout seem to add more space and light bounces off quartz countertops and the bamboo floor, which has radiant heat below. Recessed lighting is hidden behind a valance. Furnishings and fixtures aren't compromised by small spaces. In the bathroom, there is an Italian porcelain soaker tub that's large enough to lounge in. All appliances, with the exception of the fridge, are full size.

"We create space and design with the site in mind," says Mahal. "For instance, an outdoor car park can be utilized for al fresco dinner parties and the barbecue is just off the kitchen door, under cover. It's all about multiple uses."

Most people never get the opportunity to build their own home. A laneway home gives you that opportunity. "You can walk by the property years later and say, 'I built that,' with a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment," says Mahal.

TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR:

A video tour of one of Urban Lanehomes' projects, from construction through completion. homesanddesign.ca



Another Vancouver house built by Urban Lanehomes. Once again, the builder relies on large windows and a glass-sided staircase to allow as much light as possible into the laneway house, which has two bedrooms in 569 square feet of space.



JANE MUNDY'S LANEWAY HOUSE BLOG

The writer reflects on the year-long process of building her own laneway home, which had its share of triumphs and tribulations.

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