

A framed magazine cover hanging in the kitchen, *this photo*, is from a 1930s issue featuring the home. Today, the original structure (painted white) has a new, red addition designed for modern-day living, *opposite*.



little **house** near the big woods

AN ADDITION MAKES THIS ONCE-SMALL HOUSE A BETTER FIT FOR A GROWING FAMILY.

by SHAWN GILLIAM photos KIM CORNELISON styling JESSICA THOMAS





“Neighbor” took on new meaning for Christine Albertsson and Todd Hansen once they moved into their house by a wooded creek. Warblers, owls, and woodpeckers come knocking just about every day.



A lush wooded lot and nearby creek in the city sold the couple on this rare Minneapolis find, but the house wasn't always this tuned in to its surroundings. Key rooms, such as the cramped kitchen, weren't oriented toward the view, and there was no way to easily reach the backyard. It took three years for Christine and Todd, both architects, to come up with a plan: an addition in keeping with the home's modest size and style yet meeting the practical needs of the couple and their young children, August and Eva. “Finally, we were talking with our friends,” Christine recalls. “And we said, ‘We can't really project way out into the back—that would be crazy.’ And our friends said, ‘Yes, you can—that would be really cool.’”

The original 1,200-square-foot home and adjoining 1,100-square-foot, three-level addition with a new kitchen, master suite, playroom, and deck quietly tuck into the woods. The couple took every opportunity for windows to capture views. Inside, rooms serve more than one purpose, and comfort trumps formality. “After we remodeled, we got lighter-weight furniture, so we can move everything out of the way and lie on the floor, stretch out, and play games,” Todd says.

Slipcovered pieces weather lots of play from the children. “We're pretty lax about them jumping on the sofa,” Christine says with a laugh. The living room opens to the kitchen, so Todd, the cook in the family, is always close to the action. Late spring, most meals move outdoors, either to the downstairs deck or to the screen porch. “Being on the porch is special,” Christine says. “Eva and I sleep on an air mattress when the weather permits. You can feel the air moving and hear every sound. We're so happy to be part of an urban community yet connected to the day-to-day wonders of nature.”

The heart of the Albertsson-Hansen home is the living room, where the family hangs out and the kids do their homework. Christine's Swedish roots are reflected in brightly colored fabrics against all-white walls, which keeps the look lively, especially important during dark Minnesota winters.





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The screen porch, previously an unfinished space, now glistens with glossy white paint from floor to ceiling. When the weather is mild, the porch becomes outdoor living space, starting in the morning with coffee and sometimes ending with late-night poker games with friends.

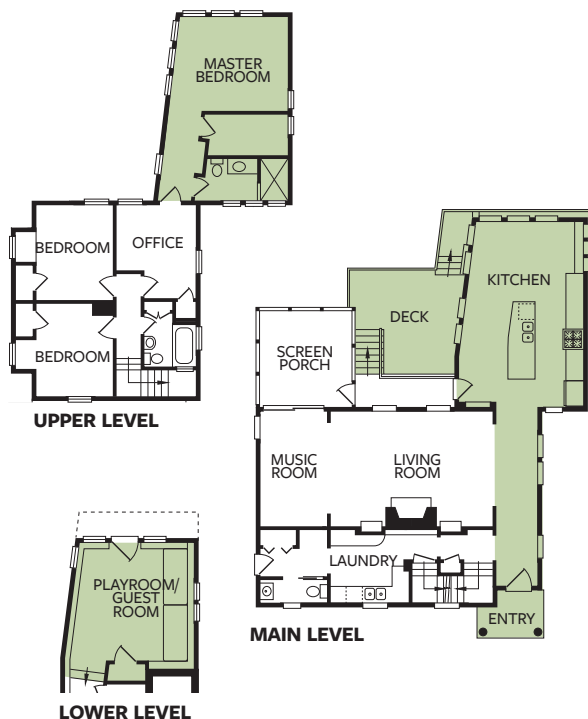




Every compact room makes full use of its space. *Clockwise from top left:* The upstairs office was once a bedroom too tiny to use as such. A piano from Christine's parents anchors the music room, which doubles as the library. The lower-level playroom also serves as a guest room with daybeds and a back door that opens to a patio. The shower in the master bath was designed so that water won't spray beyond the enclosure.



A new entry hall leads to the window-wrapped kitchen, *below*. The home's only indoor dining space is a table in the kitchen that serves all occasions. A tall window-backed cabinet boosts sunlight and holds Christine's collection of colorful glass. The kitchen's efficient work zone features a window next to the refrigerator that offers peeks of the front garden.



NATURAL INSTINCTS

The potential for a knockout view drew architects Christine Albertsson and Todd Hansen to their home. But as it was, the 1920s cottage barely took advantage of its site. And at 1,200 square feet, the house was on the small side for their growing family. The couple designed the renovation to preserve the home's cozy scale of rooms and maintain its charming features. The new 1,100-square-foot wing houses an eat-in kitchen on the main level (see plan, *left*), a playroom on the lower level, and an upper-level master suite—all with views of the nearby creek. The architects played up the original home's Colonial style and made the addition resemble a red barn. "That wasn't the idea from the outset, but we thought, 'Wouldn't that be fun?'" Todd says. On the main level, a new entry hall unites the two structures with a front porch and door that now face the street instead of the house next door. 🏠

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The deck conveniently sits a few steps down from the kitchen, housed in the red addition. Comfy low-slung chairs make the space ideal for drinks before dinner on the screen porch.