

home ingrid holohan

view finder

Innovative ideas help an inner-city home make the most of its appealing outlook

An established leafy backdrop has strongly influenced the design of this contemporary home in Highgate Hill.

Built on a steep block on Dornoch Terrace, the home takes full advantage of City views and the surrounding landscape.

The owners hired architect Richard Kirk to design a large home that would accommodate their family's diverse activities while retaining the existing 1920s timber home.

"The hardest decision was whether to keep the original house at all," says one of the owners.

"We could have renovated and extended in keeping with the style of the old house, but it really wasn't our style. It was always going to be a contemporary project."

Richard says although his clients

wanted to retain the old home, they decided to remove all the additions made to it over the years and extend in contemporary style.

The front of the house was also updated in keeping with the streetscape's original character.

"The house had been very poorly renovated. It was very badly organised so we basically had to start again," says Richard.

"Essentially the idea was to make the house more liveable and big enough for the whole family to grow."

With a big emphasis on space, the large two-level home has been cleverly designed to connect the internal spaces with its surrounding landscape without using a traditional deck.

Richard's innovative design incorporates a large opening in the wall of the

living area, beautifully framing the tree canopies and distant City views, almost like a painting.

The huge windows slide back and disappear to give an open, airy feel.

"The first decision we made was not to have the obligatory deck on the back of the house, because in doing so we were pushing the house out and losing height and space at the same time," says Richard.

"The idea was to re-create a space that was more functional than the traditional veranda space."

His clients are delighted with the results.

"We love it. It means that we can have that view and feel like we are outdoors all year around," says the owner.

"The only time we shut the windows is from around June to September."



Flowing from the living area, the gourmet timber kitchen is a central point in the home and is big enough to accommodate the largest of families.

Also on this level, the main bedroom has a huge ensuite and wall-to-wall windows to take full advantage of the views and breezes.

Located in the original part of the home, the beautiful internal staircase with intricate timberwork is designed to introduce natural light to both levels through a skylight above.

On the lower level, what was once an old flat has been completely demolished to create a teenagers' retreat, including a television room,

kitchenette, four bedrooms and a bathroom.

"It's good to have an adult space upstairs and a children's space downstairs," says the owner.

"After dinner, we really don't see each other."

The lower level also has access to the swimming pool, used regularly by all family members.

"It was really hard to get a pool in here but it was essential," says the owner.

"It's 6ft off the ground at some points and we had to move the entire house to the west to make enough room for it, but it was worth it."

The home has a conventional steel

and timber frame with a lightweight steel roof.

It received a Brisbane regional commendation (residential) in the 2003 Royal Australian Institute of Architects awards. The state award winners are to be announced on 1 August.

According to Richard, the materials were selected to blend with the natural landscape and minimise maintenance. "The external timber is Australian white beech, which is durable and doesn't need any coating."

Fitting design: The front of the house blends with the character of the streetscape, left; huge windows frame the view from the living area, below, while a skylight allows natural light to filter through



project details

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Opening out: Wall-to-wall windows take full advantage of the lush leafy backdrop