

Less is more after redesign

TERRY SMYTH RENOVATOR'S DREAM

SOMETIMES smaller is better. Jonathan and Maria Napthali's house is 10 square metres smaller than it used to be, but at least 10 times more liveable in.

"This was a very substantial renovation," Mr Napthali said. And he should know. Apart from work that required a licensed plumber, he did it all himself. This was a DIY job from the roof to the sub-floor.

"But we would never have been able to do it without Tricia Helyar's insight," he said. "I can knock a hole through a wall but I never would have come up with the ideas she came up with. Having an architect is so important."

That's Ms Helyar's cue.

"It was a poor configuration of a house - a maze of very small, dark rooms with a hallway and bathroom tacked on," she said. "So it was about getting those spaces to work more effectively without spending a fortune."

A building may not necessarily need more space, just the perception of space.

"How do you get the perception of space without building?" she asked.

A good question. Luckily, she answered it herself.

"Rather than adding on, we demolished 10 square metres of building to make the rooms more liveable," Ms Helyar said.

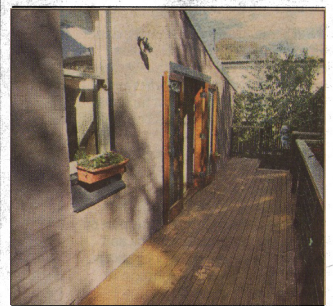
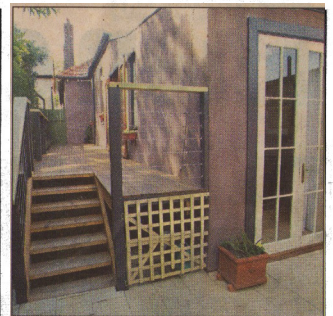
The demolished section contained a small bathroom and a hallway. The bathroom was relocated to face the rear bedroom.

"We opened the building up, moved the hallway back to the party wall [party walls separate semi-detached and terrace houses] and enlarged the bathroom.

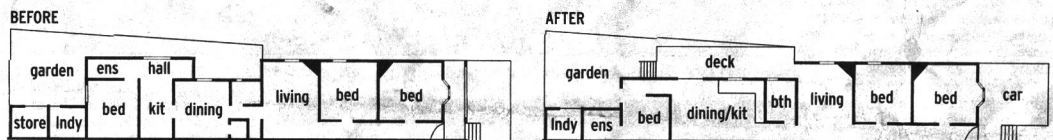
"We built a deck down the western side of the building, which gets more sunshine than the backyard. So the side of the building, which is about 2½ metres wide, is now the outdoor living area, overlooking the backyard and connected to the living and dining/kitchen areas."

An en-suite bathroom was added to the rear bedroom, which has direct access to the backyard.

Result? "What was a very internalised building is now



THE PLAN: MORE LIGHT, LESS SPACE The property: A three-bedroom, single-storey, semi-detached brick house in Cammeray. The architect: Tricia Helyar, Leichhardt. The brief: Redesign the layout to improve function, flow and natural light, and open up the living, dining and kitchen areas to the outside. The time: Three years part-time for an owner-builder. The cost: \$100,000.



much less so," Ms Helyar said.

The Napthalis are moving to Austria and the house is now for sale. Mr Napthali, a teacher, honed his building skills renovating his own home and was proud to find that prospective buyers have been impressed by the quality of his work.

Ditto for the architect's design that makes more out of less.

"The house has been made smaller but she has opened up rooms and taken out inside walls to create large spaces such as the eat-in kitchen," he said.

With the house on the market

after a \$100,000 renovation, the Napthalis are soon to find out whether or not they have overcapitalised.

They're confident, however, that the work will have been worth the investment.

"I have also invested in skills I can

use in the future," Mr Napthali said.

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