



The exterior combines dark-stained Cape Cod lap siding and two pavilions-like wings in yellow brick.

JOHN KEALEY PHOTOGRAPHY

# TAMING A DIFFICULT SITE

Quietly modern home meets the challenge of a narrow sloping lot

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Designer and Carleton architecture professor Paul Kariouk is probably best known for his eye-catching Echo House. Overlooking the Rideau Canal, a rather dull Victorian house was stripped of its peaked roof, its red brick was stained black and a new glass cube was precariously perched on its historic base. In contrast, his most recent Wellington West home at first glance appears to be comparatively sedate, albeit resolutely modern in its expression.



CHRIS MIKULA/OTTAWA CITIZEN

Architect Paul Kariouk worked with the owners to create a space that echoes the characteristics of modern condo design.

A closer look, however, reveals an accomplished response to a tricky site. Kariouk's design starts with a core block, adds two attached pavilion-like wings and introduces a third stand-alone garden pavilion aligned with the two wings. It all works with the lot's quirky characteristics to create open, flowing and expansive living spaces. Abundant natural light is teased into these spaces while views of the varied skyline are fully exploited.

The project, say both Kariouk and the owners, a professional couple with an admitted "love to build", was a highly collaborative process. The couple took a very active role in sourcing materials and high-end fixtures ferreted out from across Canada. While they wanted to move back into a house from their penthouse apartment, they also wanted to retain the open, interconnected and light-filled spatial characteristics of modern condo design.

The initial challenge, however, was the site. Facing south, the lot drops almost 20 feet from west to east and, given its relatively narrow 40-foot width, no windows could be incorporated along the tight west property line.

Fortunately, the steep drop to the east offered views into a delightful neighbouring garden. In winter, say the owners, they can even catch glimpses of the Peace Tower to the northeast. The drop also provided exposure that permits welcome morning sunlight to penetrate deep into the house.

Kariouk placed the house's dominant two-storey volume on the west above a sunken double garage. On the east side, the two wings were then attached creating a U-shaped plan.

In behind, a third detached pavilion helps frame and shape the garden terrace.

Consistent with modernist tenets, the dominant west-side space and the wings are clearly identified on the front facade. The long but simple core block is clad in dark-stained Cape Cod lap siding. In contrast, says Kariouk, the narrower yellow brick entrance wing is geometrically sculpted to ensure it dominates and downplays the garage doors.

This front wing, with its 10-foot ceiling — consistent throughout the house — serves as an expansive entry into which a powder room has been discretely wedged. At the foyer's rear, a large window looks out onto a garden nook on the basement's roof and through to the dining room.



# Infill: A comfortable, modernist home

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More windows on the dining room's northern side allow glimpses out to the garden pavilion.

To the right of the entry, an elongated, condo-like space seamlessly includes a living room dissolving into a large kitchen.

Almost 60 feet of custom, dark-stained white oak cabinetry stretches along the west wall, minimalist in its detailing and realized by furniture maker Rob Gruber.

The cabinets are split between kitchen and living room functions by an equally unadorned gas fireplace panel that was rendered in Ar-riscraft contemporary brick adapted from the exterior cladding. This overall wall treatment, along with wide, white/grey stained oak flooring, further unifies the two spaces.

In the kitchen, a large island topped by a monolithic slab of always-opulent marble dominates and another well-glazed wall provides cool northern light and a full view of the rear terrace. (The simple, modern-style landscape of terrace, gardens and wooden fencing are by Empire Enterprises.)

Across the south end of the great room, floor-to-ceiling oak panelling accommodates a large flat screen television and built-in sound system but also serves as an interior wall defining a photography studio: a space that both fulfils the owner's photography passion and serves to shield the main living spaces from the street. Two, 10-foot-high pocket doors of frosted glass bracket this wall and allow southern light into the living room.

Opposite the fireplace and cabinetry, steel and wood stairs with glass balustrades front the large window, maximizing transparency and allowing the garden nook to be constantly present in the house, say the owners.

Cooking and dining are important to the couple, whose son and daughter-in-law are both professional chefs. The dining room, therefore, is no gratuitous gesture. Bigfoot, a modern interpretation of a massive oak farm table from Germany's E15 Design, dominates this space, while a substantial modern pendant chandelier by Vancouver's Bocci provides further animation.

Through the room's large north window, the terrace pavilion is fully visible. This three-season garden folly, a particularly well-liked space for the owners, connects to the house by a covered walk and boasts a large fireplace. A unique movable Weatherwall glass facade opens the lounge area toward the dining room.

Upstairs, the wide hallway that separates two bedrooms becomes



PHOTOS: JOHN KEALEY PHOTOGRAPHY

**The living room seamlessly dissolves into a large kitchen. Almost 60 feet of custom, dark-stained white oak cabinetry stretches along the west wall, minimalist in its detailing and realized by furniture maker Rob Gruber.**

a voluminous photography and art gallery space. To the rear, the master bedroom stretches across the north side with yet another of the house's ubiquitous large windows overlooking the terrace. The bedroom and its generous ensuite bathroom, with free-standing bath and independent glass shower, boast creamy rich porcelain tiling and dark-stained oak cabinetry.

While the house's cool, subtly elegant and light-dappled spaces are clearly on view, less obvious is the home's advanced heating and cooling system.

Along with electric radiant floor heating in the bathrooms and entry (and a water radiant system in the basement), the house has been divided into three heating zones, one for each floor.

This includes the basement, which includes a glass-walled, rubber-floor gym with a large window onto the sloping garden.

Overall, the home, which was built by West-boro Homes, provides a fine example of a designer working in close collaboration with clients to create a comfortable, modernist home while fully exploiting the potential of a challenging urban site.



**A large window in the dining room offers a view of the terrace and reading room, which is connected to the house by a covered walk.**

**Online:** See more photos and the floor plan at [ottawacitizen.com/homes](http://ottawacitizen.com/homes)