

This Hintonburg duplex blends style and functionality, with a touching backstory. **OPPOSITE TOP:** A light-filled living space provides an inviting atmosphere for entertaining.

SORELLE HOUSE

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Nestled on a quiet street in Ottawa's Hintonburg neighbourhood, the *Sorelle House* redefines duplex living, and what it means to age-in-place.

Designed by **Kariouk Architects** and built by **Crossford Construction**, the duplex was the vision of sisters Sandra and Franca, and Franca's husband Mark, who all sought to build a shared home that would enable them to better support one another. Though Franca passed away last year, the duplex stands as a lasting tribute to their thoughtful approach – blending accessibility with independence, while staying connected to the community they love.

“We saw a lot of duplexes coming up in the neighbourhood and we thought, ‘wouldn't it be really easy if we lived right beside each other,’ and be much more security based when someone was there,” says Sandra. “Franca and I would joke about it all the time.”

At the time, Mark and Franca were looking to downsize, and Sandra, who already owned the lot, proposed tearing down her home to build two new houses on the property. In 2018, they reached out to Kariouk Architects, impressed by their work on other homes in the neighbourhood. *Continued on page 84*

ABOVE LEFT: Each unit has a rooftop balcony that provides gorgeous views of the Gatineau Hills and downtown Ottawa. **LEFT:** Sandra and her brother-in-law Mark in Sandra's kitchen.



In 2020 the building process officially commenced, with the homeowners moving in by 2022.

For Kariouk Architects, the challenge was to fit two homes onto a small lot. A flagpole arrangement was proposed, where the two units share a single driveway, with garages tucked out of sight. This design prioritizes pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, placing more emphasis on front lawns and greenery at street level, rather than pavement and garage doors.

“The homeowners wanted something different, not your average duplex model,” says Paul Kariouk, principal architect at Kariouk Architects. “That’s where the L-shaped model came in. They wanted it to look like one house but with two different interior personalities.”

Named the *Sorelle House* – *sorelle* meaning sisters in Italian – it’s a tribute to Sandra and Franca’s Italian heritage that highlights their different design preferences. Each home has about 2,000 square feet of living space, complete with a rooftop terrace that offers views of the Gatineau Hills to the north and downtown Ottawa to the east.



LEFT: The second floor of Sandra’s home serves as a home office and bedroom, flipping the traditional layout and putting her kitchen one floor above the bedroom.

BELOW LEFT: Sandra’s entryway makes a statement with bold windows and red accents, seamlessly tying the exterior colours into her home. **BELOW:** Sandra’s third-floor kitchen and living room were designed to maximize daylight and are where she spends most of her time.





A bathroom with light-toned materials matches the theme carried throughout the home.

Sandra's home, positioned to face the street, was designed to maximize natural daylight and create a bright, open feel. Sandra, who spends most of her time in the living room and kitchen created by **Handwerk Bespoke Kitchens**, chose to place these main living spaces on the third floor for a brighter and more open atmosphere.

"Here, you have a sense of being able to see out among the neighbourhood, but also feel very private, and that was one of my criteria that I was hoping for in the planning phases," says Sandra.

In contrast, Mark and Franca's home sits tucked behind Sandra's, offering a more sheltered and intimate setting, with a design that embraces a moody, atmospheric vibe. The layout follows more of a traditional floor plan with the kitchen, also by Handwerk, located on the second floor. A cosy den was added off the primary bedroom on their third floor, creating an intimate living space. For Mark, some of his fondest memories in the home were spent there with Franca, sitting by the fireplace (**Hubert Fireplace Consultation + Design**), reading and sipping tea together. In a heartfelt tribute to Franca, Paul and his team inscribed a custom surround for Mark's fireplace in her honour.

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TOP LEFT: Sleek cabinetry and statement stone steals the show in this kitchen. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Sandra's bedroom features a wardrobe that has been in her family for years. **RIGHT:** A custom glass shower wall showcases a painting by Sandra's sister, adding a personal touch.

feature

“Paul let me know his office would like to do something so they came and took the surround away and came back with this,” says Mark.

“For me, this room really represents Mark and Franca because they were always reading. So this really sings to me that this is them,” says Sandra.

The project marked the first collaboration between Kariouk Architects and Crossford Construction. Despite the challenges of building during the pandemic and navigating the constraints of a small lot, both teams found the experience rewarding and are proud of the completed home.

“Paul’s team brought a lot of very cool, vibrant elements to the project, says **Lindsay Nicol**, president and founder of Crossford Construction. “The entire project happened in the heart of the pandemic. There were many issues in the supply chain, especially with a job like that with unique elements. So we had challenges, but at the end of the day we managed to keep things on budget and complete the job successfully thanks to everyone’s cooperation and help.”

RIGHT: Mark’s home, tucked at the back of the structure, was thoughtfully designed to offer a quiet escape from city life. **BELOW:** Mark enjoys catching some sun in his sheltered back patio. **BELOW RIGHT:** In contrast to Sandra’s bright and airy space, Mark’s home embraces richer, darker tones, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.





The design prioritized the concept of aging-in-place, incorporating thoughtful features such as accessible showers, perforated staircases and elevators in each home to enhance convenience and mobility. The basement rooms are adaptable and can easily be converted into caregiver suites, a feature in mind for the homeowners as a means of independence and community connection as they age. *Continued on page 88*

TOP LEFT: Both units are equipped with elevators, ensuring the homeowners can comfortably age in place. **TOP RIGHT:** Mark's top floor includes a quiet den, a space filled with cherished memories from Franca's time living there. **ABOVE:** A large, spacious kitchen offers ample space to cook and entertain.

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“By designing homes that are accessible from the start, we create spaces where people can remain longer, avoiding the need for costly renovations or moving to assisted living down the road,” says Paul. “Financially it makes a lot of sense and takes pressure off of our healthcare system and homes for the aging. There’s also the emotional support of being able to stay in your home that’s really important.” **OH**



TOP LEFT: The layout of Mark’s space follows more of a traditional floor plan compared to Sandra’s, situating the kitchen on the second floor and the primary bedroom on the floor above. **ABOVE:** Since Mark’s home is tucked behind Sandra’s, a skylight was added to bring more light into the home, illuminating the perforated metal stairs. **LEFT:** Mark enjoys spending warm evenings on his rooftop terrace, listening to music and taking in the view.