

Beaches cottage becomes an inspired home renovation

By **HEATHER HUDSON** Special to the Star
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When John Scofield took to the third floor of his home's renovation-in-progress, it was to help workers frame out two bedrooms for his stepdaughters. What he saw stopped him in his tracks.

"He called me and said, 'Get over here. There's something you need to see!'" confirms his wife Shea Warrington, 45.



Shea Warrington and husband John Scofield with their kids, from left, Mattie, twins Johnnie and Chace, and Jess. Behind the half-wall is a Scofield's design creation, "a mud room hidden in plain sight," says Warrington. (CARLOS OSORIO / TORONTO STAR)

An experienced realtor, **Warrington** braced herself for a house-related horror. Instead, she encountered a grinning husband — and a stunning view of **Lake Ontario** that the couple didn't realize came with the turn-of-the-century house in Toronto's **Beach** neighbourhood.

"It's a beautiful lake view directly to the south, unencumbered by trees. At night we can see Rochester lit up. In the summer, blue water and sailboats," says Warrington.

The discovery of the lake vista changed everything. Scofield, 45, quickly rejigged the design for the third floor to include a kids' lounge and homework room with a wall of windows. Their teenage daughter agreed to relocate her bedroom to the basement where she'd enjoy more privacy and her own bathroom.



THEN: The family's living room in the 1900s-built, drafty and cold Beaches home. (WARRINGTON-SCOFFIELD FAMILY)

The couple's massive renovation began in 2013 when they bought a snug, \$1.05-million, three-bedroom cottage in The Beach, just three doors down from their previous home. "We wanted the house for the lane (behind the house). The kids ride bikes and play out there, and the elementary school is so close we can hear the recess bells," says Warrington.

They knew they would renovate, but the family of six — including kids Mattie, 15, Jessie, 12 and twins Chace and Johnny, 8 — made a go of cohabitating in the 1,200-square-foot home for two years while plans and permits were put in place.

"The basement was failing, there was no heat in the kitchen and we used to kid that you could windsurf through the house because there was such a strong breeze," says Warrington.



THEN: Breeze-like drafts and a kitchen without heat were among the drawbacks of the original house. (WARRINGTON-SCOFFIELD FAMILY)

Built in the early 1900s, the house had slim, two-by-three foot framing boards and was cold from top to bottom. The master bedroom on the main floor at the front of the house was so chilly, they joked their memory foam mattress would take 20 minutes of body heat to unfreeze.

"It was a cold house, but we had good times there. We had a portable heater and we'd all cuddle up," says Warrington. "We don't need a big house for the six of us. For us, it's all about cosy."

They may not need the space, but their 3,400-square-foot, \$1.2 million renovation offers a lot of it. "We want our kids at home with their friends as much as possible. It's great to offer them a number of separate places to be," says Warrington.



NOW: Scofield used the kitchen as a divider in the centre of the main floor to give the home's open-concept design some structure. (CARLOS OSORIO / TORONTO STAR)

Scofield, who owns a foundation and excavating company, envisioned a five-bedroom, **mid-century modern** design with a contemporary beach exterior. He designed the foundation, poured the foundation, contributed to other construction elements and built a number of custom finishings, including built-in closets, kitchen shelving units and a handmade, walnut-wrapped half-wall in the family room.

"People assume that the design is all me and John's the tradesman, but he's the one who has the brilliant design ideas," says Warrington.

She points to what lies behind the family room's half-wall and abutting the back entrance that's used dozens of times every day. "He comes up with amazing ideas like cubbies for kids' backpacks, boots and stuff. And the half-wall, which gives us a mud room hidden in plain sight."

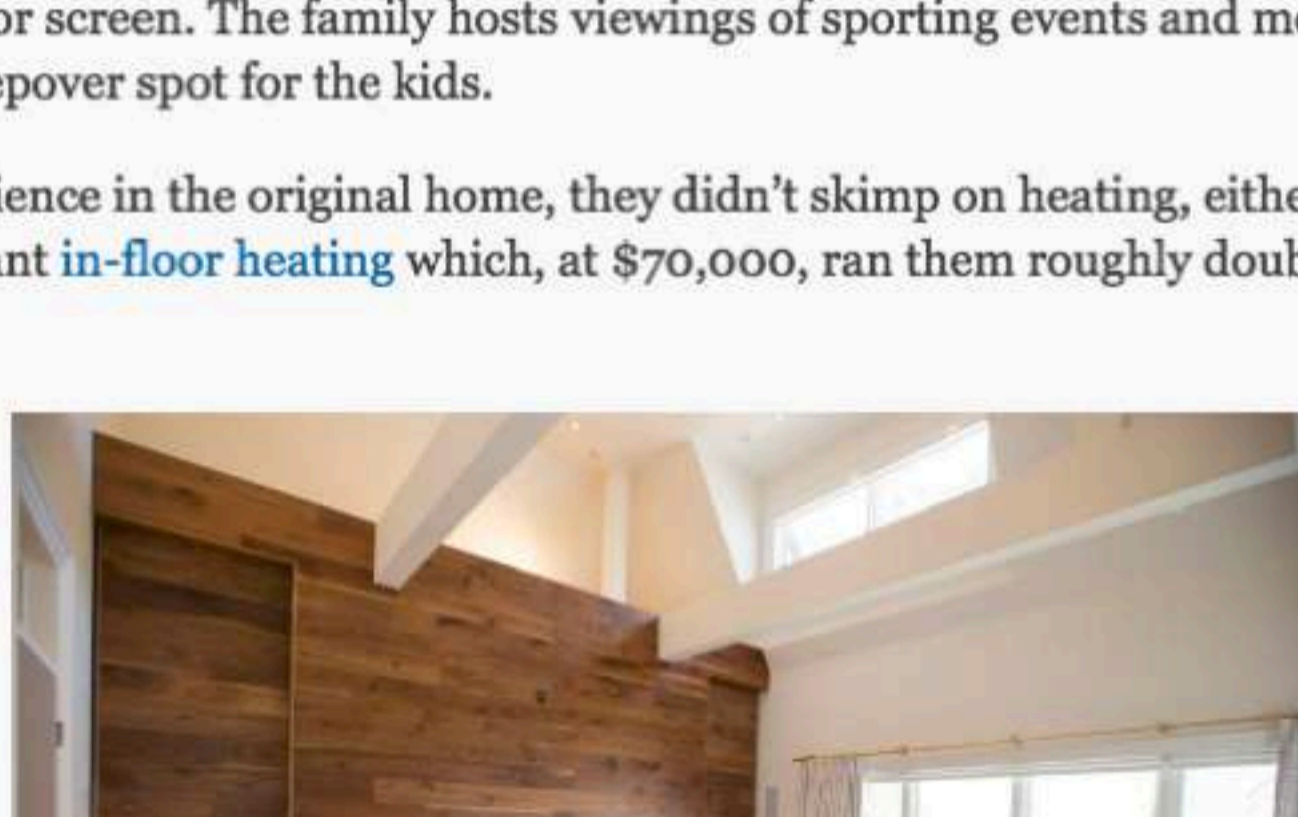


NOW: The back of the house features a floor-to-ceiling, lift-and-glide door to the backyard. From left, kids Chace, Mattie and Jess, Shea Warrington, John Scofield, and Johnnie. (CARLOS OSORIO / TORONTO STAR)

Another highlight of the home is a theatre room that cost close to six figures. "I was really concerned about what we were going to do with 20-by-24-foot room with no light. We started tabling the theatre idea rather than a traditional rec room," Scofield says.

Progressive Interiors did all the theatre work, featuring soundproofed walls, state-of-the-art surround sound and a 168-inch projector screen. The family hosts viewings of sporting events and movie screenings and the room is a favourite sleepover spot for the kids.

After their frigid experience in the original home, they didn't skimp on heating, either. All three floors feature hot-water radiant **in-floor heating** which, at \$70,000, ran them roughly double the cost of a forced-air furnace system.



NOW: The master bedroom's double-door, walk-in closet also serves as an oversized headboard, another of Scofield's designs. (CARLOS OSORIO / TORONTO STAR)

"In-floor heating is reasonably efficient and extremely comfortable. You can turn it on separately for each level. With newer insulation standards you can find a lot of efficiencies. We've never had the heat on in the basement," says Scofield.

Although the heating decision was a no-brainer, Warrington and Scofield had to find compromises in other design elements throughout the house. "Shea wanted an open environment, but I like defined rooms, so we balanced that out by putting the kitchen in the middle (of the main floor)," he says.

The dining room, with a 12-person table, and lounge are the face of the house for guests who enter through the front door. Behind the kitchen is the family room featuring a lift-and-glide, floor-to-ceiling door that opens to the backyard. "Even though we have this great big house, we live in the kitchen space. The kids do their homework after school and we hang out there a lot," says Warrington.



NOW: The view of Lake Ontario prompted Scofield's redesign of the third floor to create a homework and lounge space. (CARLOS OSORIO / TORONTO STAR)

Still, everyone has their own sanctuary. Jessie sleeps among the treetops on the third floor, the boys each have a room down the hall from the cathedral-ceilinged master bedroom on the second floor and Mattie has a retreat in the basement.

Like all renovated family homes, every room has a story. But none of them hold a candle to that dazzling view from the third floor.

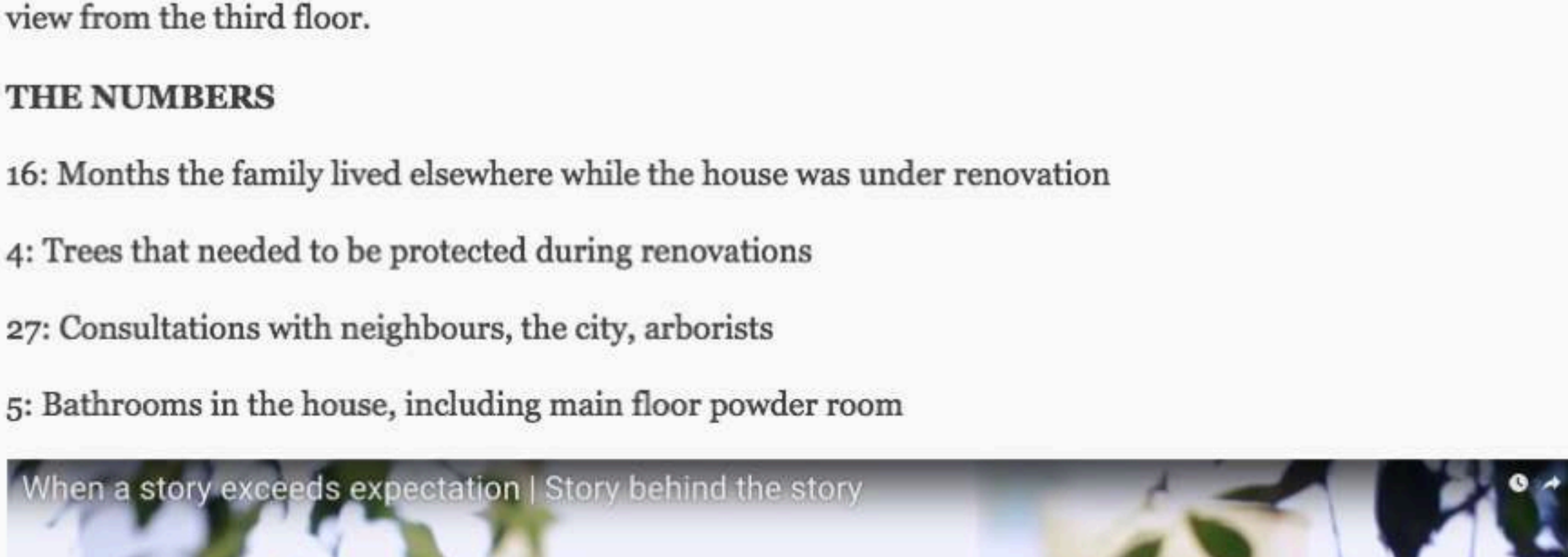
THE NUMBERS

16: Months the family lived elsewhere while the house was under renovation

4: Trees that needed to be protected during renovations

27: Consultations with neighbours, the city, arborists

5: Bathrooms in the house, including main floor powder room



When a story exceeds expectation | Story behind the story

The Star's New in Homes & Condos editor Jane Van Der Voort works with freelance writer a lot. When a story idea comes in, like the one on a Beaches family home renovation, the results can exceed expectations.