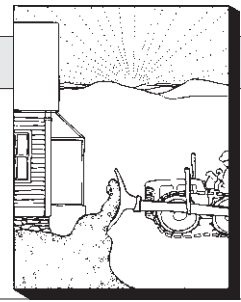


A Narrow Victory

by Denise Andrews and Kathleen O'Brien



What do you do with a 25x112-foot lot in the center of a lovely Victoria, B.C., suburb when the town denies you a 5-foot setback variance? You build a very narrow house, of course.

Designer Jordan Mills and builder Joe Loiacono gave new meaning to the term “downsizing” with a 62-foot-long, 1,100-square-foot, two-story house that’s just 10 feet 2 inches wide. The design met all local zoning and code requirements, so there wasn’t much the neighbors could do about what some refer to as “the trailer.” Mills and Loiacono did need a sympathetic building inspector, however, to pass a requirement that living rooms be 11 feet wide. The inspector kindly let them measure to the back of a bay window to squeak by the code.

Loiacono said construction was like any normal size project he’d done in

20 years of home building — in fact, it was easier because the design made good use of standard lumber sizes. Hardly any of the 10-foot ceiling and floor joists had to be cut, which meant very little wood was wasted. Loiacono’s only doubts came after the pour.

“Even a 3,000-square-foot foundation looks too small to me before I begin framing,” said Loiacono. “But when I saw this one, I thought ‘This looks like a bowling alley.’”

Owners Dennis and Heather Carpenter decided they loved the “minimalist” home just minutes after walking through the front door. Make that the side door: To avoid the feeling of walking down a 62-foot long corridor, Mills located the main entry on the side at the center of the house.

The Carpenters have discovered the benefits of compact living. “You just

don’t go out and buy things anymore,” says Heather, when asked about the limited storage space (there is no basement). “Then you realize you didn’t really need those things anyway.”

Though small in size, the house remains big in appeal. At a cost to build of \$138,500, the house attracted a steady stream of potential first-time home buyers. Mills and Loiacono are convinced that it’s a design whose time has come: a small, energy-efficient home that is reasonably priced, easily maintained, and requires less of our dwindling natural resources to build. ■

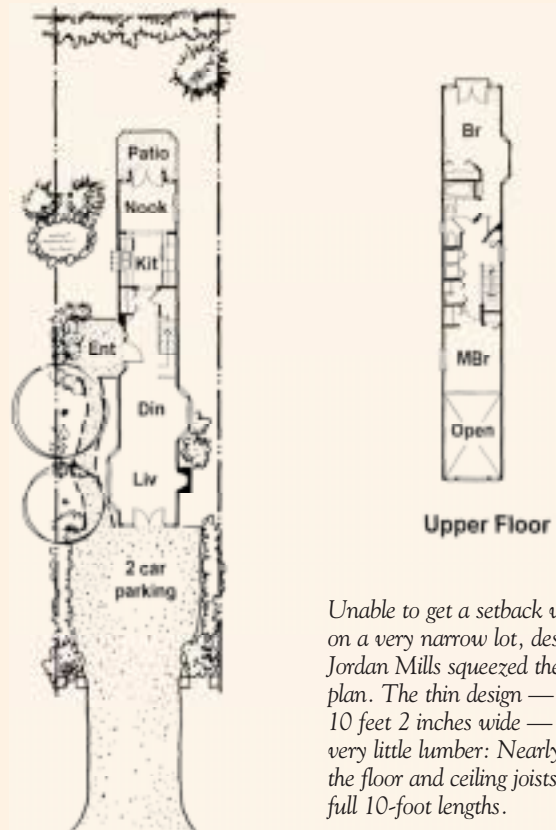
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Bump-outs, vaulted ceilings, and plenty of glass make the skimpy interior dimensions feel more spacious.

Some neighbors still call it “the trailer,” but buyers in Victoria, B.C., were interested in the skinny house even before it was completed.

Thin Is In



Unable to get a setback variance on a very narrow lot, designer Jordan Mills squeezed the floor plan. The thin design — just 10 feet 2 inches wide — wasted very little lumber: Nearly all of the floor and ceiling joists are full 10-foot lengths.