

Woman with cancer given go-ahead for dream home

Terminally ill architect wins city approval after sparring with neighbour for months

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An Etobicoke woman with terminal cancer who faced a messy battle to build her dream home before her death will soon get her wish.

Anna Craig, a 37-year-old architect, has been sparring with her neighbour for months over plans to renovate her Twentieth St. bungalow into a modern, open-concept home.

The city's committee of adjustment recently OK'd a series of variances allowing Craig to construct a second storey and extend her house's existing rear deck. The changes were opposed by Craig's 89-year-old neighbour Joan Janes and Janes's builder son-in-law Gary Burtch, who argued that the renovations would block sunlight, impede Janes's view and decrease the property value of neighbouring homes.

Burtch responded to the Star's requests for comment by requesting that the paper cease attempting to contact Janes. He did not indicate whether he and Janes would continue to oppose Craig's renovations.

Craig said the alterations will transform her petite home into a modern monument of love that she could leave her husband and two children — Elliot, 4, and Maelle, 2.

She called the news that she could go ahead and renovate "a relief."

"As a person who is in the middle of a career derailed by terminal illness, being able to build and design something that is a reference to what I could have accomplished in a full, lifelong career is a huge thing," she said.

"It's great that this is going to happen."



JOSEPH HOWARTH

Architect Anna Craig, 37, seen here with her husband and two children, says renovations to her house will transform it to a monument of love.

Craig said she and Janes have not spoken since the city issued approvals, but Janes, who has lived on Twentieth St. for 68 years, told the Star in July that she and Craig are "the best of friends."

Regardless of the tension between the neighbours, Craig said she is excited to get to work.

"I've got a schematic design, which means I've got the idea of how (the house) is going to look," she says. "Now, I've got to look at how it's going to be built by working with engineers to get the structure designed."

But before she can put a shovel in the ground or start tearing up walls, she says, she will have to figure out how to fund the home "without put-

ting the family through stress or leaving them at risk.

"Like anyone else in their thirties, I'm not financially in the position to design and build a house," she says. "Normally, this is something we would do later in life, but we are on the timeline of being terminally ill."

Though she's yet to decide how she will come up with the money to fund her renovations, she says, she will consider crowdfunding and fundraising.

But for now, she's just content that her dreams haven't been crushed.

"I've always been passionate about building and creating," she said. "Finally, I feel like this can actually come about."