

# Mansion turned boarding house rediscovers its past

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92 BEDFORD RD., Toronto  
Asking price: \$2.355-million  
Taxes: \$12,400 (2010)  
Lot size: 25-by-141 feet  
Agents: Allan L. Ward, Russell & Ward  
Realty Corp., and Marianne Hunt, Keller  
Williams Referred Realty, Inc.

## The back story

This stately three-storey Annex mansion, built circa 1890, was a run-down boarding house when married couple Liz Hunt and Jeff Jackson first laid eyes on it 16 years ago. “There were nine bathrooms, er, toilets, and nine so-called kitchens,” recalls Ms. Hunt, a speech pathologist by training who now runs her own business communication consultancy company out of the home.

“The things done to this house were completely against code. We came in and did everything with inspections and to code, including upgrading all the plumbing and the electrical and renovating the interior right to the rafters.”

The result is a beautiful old house with a thoroughly modern interior that has retained such original details as decorative lead glass windows, hand-carved wooden bannisters and a second-storey balcony that, thanks to a renovation approved by the Historical Board, has been incorporated into the family living room on the second floor.

The couple live in the four-bedroom, six-bathroom house with their two teenaged children, each with a room of one's own on the third floor. The finished basement is a home office that includes a conference room and office space for staff.

The main floor is where Mr. Jackson, an illustrator and painter of vivid yet dreamy landscapes (many of them decorating the walls of the house) does his work, using a

front-of-house studio with built-in shelving accommodating his brushes and paints. With a background in architecture, Mr. Jackson also designed the home's etched glass transoms and some of the carpets, citing the house as his inspiration.

"The light here is wonderful," he says, motioning to the prevalence of large windows enabling the interior to be flooded with sunshine.

At the rear of the house are more windows, indeed an entire wall of them, overlooking a landscaped backyard with three parking spots.

The window wall is part of a new rear addition that the couple created to house a main floor apartment for Mr. Jackson's widowed mother.

The 1,000-square-foot apartment at present is vacant (the elderly Mrs. Jackson having moved out with her new boyfriend, and good for her) and in future could be rented out for extra income or be used as additional office space. Ms. Hunt says that the house is flexible like that.

"I just love sitting at my desk in the front window, having usurped Jeff's studio space, watching the 6 p.m. traffic and thinking, 'poor things, they still have another 30 minutes to go before dinner'. Me? I just have to walk three seconds upstairs and I'm home. It's the best feeling, I tell you."

## **What's new**

The short answer? Everything. Working closely with Danielle French, the interior decorator who also did their Kawartha area cottage as featured in *Canadian House and Home* magazine, the couple twice renovated their vintage house, completely transforming the interior. The first took place shortly after purchasing the house in 1994 and spanned six months during which time the house was gutted to upgrade the electrical, plumbing and heating. "This is when we created the office, studio and apartment spaces," says Ms. Hunt. The second reno that took place eight years later added 750 square feet of living space to the interior to accommodate, among other things, a den at the rear of the house with a walk out to a large deck nestled among the trees.

## **The neighbourhood**

On the day of the house visit, Canadian author Margaret Atwood was seen trying to cross Bedford to get to her own house on the opposite side. "The area is full of famous people," says agent Allan Ward, noting that award-winning architect Bruce Kuwabara lives somewhere to the right of 92 Bedford and Galen Weston, Jr., chairman of Loblaw, lives somewhere to the left, and Adrienne Clarkson, the former governor general, lives somewhere

behind. While Mr. Jackson is himself something of a celebrity himself (his work hangs in the museum at Spoleto and in Toronto inside the Joseph D. Carrier Gallery where there's currently an exhibition of his latest paintings), his wife maintains they didn't move into the neighbourhood to rub shoulders with fame. "It's within walking distance to everything," she says. "In 10 minutes I am downtown or having lunch at the ROM. I can also walk to the opera. And yet the house is so peaceful. When my brother stays here in a bedroom at the back of the house he always tells me it's so quiet he thinks he's in the country."

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