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"To me, quiet luxury is about restraint, intention and refinement."
— Jessica Cinnamon, designer





PHOTOS: MIKE CHAJECKI

**Natural stone extends across the backsplash and countertop, anchoring the matte black cabinetry and oversized range hood in the home's kitchen.**

# Serenity now

## Refined reboot brought meditative flow to home shared by three generations

Silvana Longo

In 2008, Sharon Tam and her family moved to Banbury–Don Mills for the schools and central location. But the original house never felt quite right.

"I never liked the house since day one," Tam says. "We renovated before moving in, but I still didn't like the layout or the low eight-foot ceilings." After years of searching for another home in the neighbourhood — they couldn't find one that backed onto the park they loved like this one — they gave up the hunt and chose to rebuild instead. The planning process, which spanned several years and involved three architects, eventually led to a fresh start.

Designer Jessica Cinnamon was introduced to the family through their builder and quickly became Tam's creative partner and sounding board.

"She and her team spent the time to listen and brought my vision to life," Tam says. "They were very patient with my ever-changing ideas and were able to accommodate them in the design."

The result is a main floor that reads as calm, cohesive and elevated, while meeting the day-to-day needs of a busy family of five.

"To me, quiet luxury is about restraint, intention and refinement," Cinnamon says.

"It doesn't shout for attention, but rather invites you to notice the details over time."

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> CREATING INTENTIONAL SPACES WITH SOFT BOUNDARIES WAS IMPORTANT. WE CURATED THE LAYOUT ACROSS MULTIPLE LEVELS TO SUPPORT DIFFERENT SCHEDULES AND NEEDS.
>
> — *JESSICA CINNAMON, DESIGNER*

COMMENT

# *Congestion management levy misses the mark*

## New residential development not creating gridlock

DAVE WILKES

We agree with the City of Toronto that congestion is choking the city. Gridlock in the GTA is not just frustrating — it is costing us.

According to the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis, congestion is draining the regional economy to the tune of $44.7 billion annually in social and economic costs.

In a time of rising costs and economic uncertainty, we simply cannot afford this inefficiency.

So, we are certainly aligned with the city on the significance and urgency of the issue, but unfortunately, that is where the agreement ends.

New residential development or private development is not the cause of congestion — but it is a contributing factor, albeit a very small one.

According to the city's own data, private development work makes up just 5 per cent of active work zones across Toronto. Of that 5 per cent, only a fraction is composed of lane closures to enable residential housing — and that is directly attributable to the current city policies and constraints that make it harder, not easier, to build efficiently.

So in other words, development is a small part of a bigger issue and residential development just a small subset of that, and it is due to the city's rules for how to handle staging for construction.

Yet these facts notwithstanding and instead of tackling the root causes of congestion, the City of Toronto is reaching for the wrong tools — and worse, it is blaming the wrong people.

A potential "Congestion Management Levy or escalating road occupancy fees" on private development would be a clear misstep.

Not only would this do little to ease gridlock as it is simply another fee, it would actively worsen Toronto's housing crisis by adding yet more cost to new housing development.

There are numerous practical solutions the city has yet to implement that could immediately reduce congestion without penalizing development and adding more cost to housing:

- Limit CaféTO on main roads where traffic is already jammed.
- Move parking off major arteries, freeing up lane space for flowing traffic.
- Relocate bike lanes from connector roads to alternate routes with lower traffic volumes.
- Allow 24/7 construction in designated areas to accelerate project timelines and reduce congestion periods.
- Provide financial incentives to finish infrastructure work early.

These are not radical suggestions — they are tried and tested strategies in global cities facing similar pressures.

The Toronto Region Board of Trade has also laid out a compelling congestion action plan with many of these ideas front and centre. Yet instead of moving in that direction, the city is contemplating punitive measures.

And the irony is, the building and development industry is stuck in the same traffic as everyone else.

Construction trucks that deliver materials for new homes are frequently delayed because they cannot navigate poorly managed detours or congested side streets. This not only causes frustration but creates real delays in home construction — the very thing we are all trying to speed up in a housing-affordability crisis.

Blaming development for congestion is not just inaccurate, it is harmful. It distracts from the real levers that can move the needle on traffic relief, and it slows down progress on building the homes our growing region desperately needs.

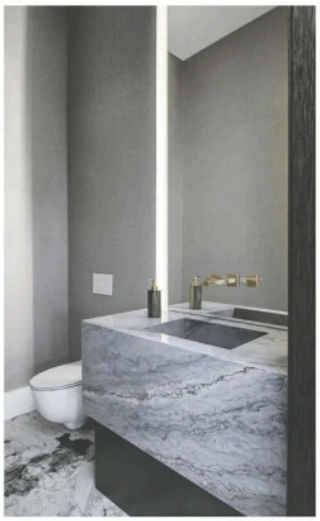
Proper congestion management can and should support responsible residential development. It is not either/or. But placing any additional burden on development, especially when the real fixes are being left on the table, would be misguided.

Addressing congestion is critical to the region's economic health — but so is maintaining a development environment that allows housing and infrastructure to move forward.

The City of Toronto has an opportunity to get both right. We hope they take it.

*Dave Wilkes is president and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD), the voice of the home building, land development and professional renovation industry in the GTA. For the latest industry news and new home data, visit www.bildgta.ca.*





PHOTOS: MIKE CHAJECKI

**In the principal ensuite, left, rift-cut white oak cabinetry and dramatic natural marble deliver a spa-like feel, accented by matte black fixtures. In the powder room, right, rich stone is paired with moody lighting.**

# Home offers balance of beauty and practicality

*REBUILD*

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In this home, those details start at the front door. In the entryway, concealed storage is integrated with statement lighting and soft natural marble, creating a sculptural feel that repeats throughout the main floor.

One of the most dramatic examples is the kitchen, clad in warm wood tones and continuous natural marble. "Uninterrupted surfaces create a sense of order and calm," Cinnamon explains, "allowing the architecture to breathe."

The marble island, backsplash and cooking wall feature the same bold stone, used consistently for cohesion and impact. "I wanted to bring depth and richness to the space," Cinnamon says, explaining that natural stone was the best way to achieve that. "Its organic veining and texture create a visual and tactile experience that can't be replicated with man-made materials."

Integration is another key theme. Hidden appliances, a concealed coffee station and extensive millwork storage allow the family to maintain clean surfaces without sacrificing utility. "The clients were very clear about wanting a clutter-free environment," Cinnamon says. "We wanted that storage to feel seamless, hidden yet highly functional."



**Custom millwork and integrated lighting lend the foyer a warm, architectural presence, with concealed storage.**

That balance of beauty and practicality is especially important in a home designed for three generations. The main floor includes an elevator for Tam's aging mother-in-law, installed not for immediate necessity but as a long-term investment in accessibility.

"Creating intentional spaces with soft boundaries was important," Cinnamon notes. "We curated the layout across multiple levels to support different schedules and needs."

The principal ensuite is one of the most serene spaces on the main floor. Wrapped in soft tones and matte finishes, it features rift-cut white oak, large-format textured tiles and natural marble. A hidden pocket door allows privacy when needed but disappears into the wall to preserve flow and openness. "We chose a neutral tile with a gentle texture to let the stone be the focal point," Cinnamon says. "The interplay between wood and marble creates a refined balance between soft and hard materials."

Lighting plays a quiet but powerful role in the home's atmosphere. From ambient mirror lights to under-cabinet glows and coves in the millwork, it's designed to support the materials, not compete with them. "We always consider the use of the space and layer the lighting accordingly," Cinnamon explains. "Task lighting for function, ambient for atmosphere."

For Tam, the home's transformation has been life-changing.

"The kitchen is beautiful and functional, with a large island, a lot of cupboards and even a hidden one to hide clutter," she says. "The family room has expansive windows overlooking the park, and a custom chandelier like a pearl necklace. It's breathtaking."

While other areas of the home continue to evolve, the completed main floor serves as a distilled expression of Cinnamon's design ethos and the life the family has built within it. "This home doesn't demand attention but it rewards it," Cinnamon says. "It's a space that feels effortless, grounded and highly personal."

*Special to National Post*

# One tote, one day method simplifies clearing clutter

MELISSA HANK

Despite the best efforts of Marie Kondo, and the advice of countless professional organizers, decluttering seems to be one of those tasks we just can't master. Witness the many techniques that promise an organized home in record time — each has a catchy name, as if success is born of TikTok-ready hashtags.

But still, we hope and we try. It helps to remember that no one solution can suit the needs, personalities and schedules of everyone. So while the Packing Party method made famous by The Minimalists may work for some people, others might win with the KonMari Method devised by Kondo. Or the 80/20 method. Or something else.

Which brings us to the One Tote, One Day method. As writer Lisa Milbrand recently outlined on the Real Simple website, it makes use of the tote bags that somehow always magically appear in our homes.

"You pick a room, grab a tote and fill it fast with things that don't belong in there — whether it's stuff that you can trash or stuff that belongs in another room," said Milbrand. "Then, you dispose of the contents, and prep your bag for another go the next day."

Milbrand described trying the method in her entryway. She noted that since items tended to accumulate there, she could fill the bag quickly and make it a daily habit. Plus, the entryway is a high-traffic area and implementing the technique provided a satisfying streamlined space.

"The One Tote, One Day method seemed custom-made for managing visible clutter," wrote Milbrand. "It helped me quickly corral papers, packages, trash and other things that were just left out on the console (and, ahem, the floor!). There was a clear before-and-after difference that I was able to achieve in barely any time."

Milbrand did note some downsides. While throwing out the trash she collected was easy enough, sometimes she didn't get to the putting-things-away part. And the method wouldn't work for certain spaces — like the pantry — which might need a more in-depth session that allowed for sorting and reorganizing as well as decluttering.

Still, she gave the One Tote, One Day method a thumbs up.

"To me, this decluttering method is ideal for those 'hurry and clean up before friends come over' moments, to help you look more organized and put together than you are. (Just make sure to set aside some time to put the stuff away — even if you can't do it right away!)," Milbrand wrote.

"And it'd work really well to clear away visual mess when you just need a quick reset to make your home feel more serene — like a fast-track speed clean before the weekend or the start of the workweek, so you can start on a more relaxed note."

*Postmedia News*