



The living room in the 7,093 sq ft house faces a pool. PHOTOS: TAN HAI HAN



A bathroom in the bigger house has his-and-hers vanity tops and sinks.

Everyone under one roof

His children are only six and eight, but the owner of a multi-generational home in the Bukit Timah area has already made plans for when he has grandchildren.

He hired architect Wu Yen Yen to build a multi-generational home for his family of five, with plans to put in extra space for when his children grow up, get married and start their own families.

An attic was added to his two-storey house, which was also enlarged all around. The house has a built-up area of 7,093 sq ft and a swimming pool at the back.

The owner of the house, who declined to be named, got inspiration from his neighbour.

The latter had hired Ms Wu about three years ago to increase the size of his two-storey house to include an attic and a lift. Its built-up area is 6,135 sq ft.

He also had her design it in such a way that a house within a house could be carved out in future for his children – a daughter, 19, and a son, 22 – when either gets married and starts his or her own family.

Ms Wu, 38, principal architect of Genome Architects, says that multi-generational homes are becoming more popular here.

"Ancestral houses are uniquely Asian, but aren't discussed a lot. Many people live in such houses, but current houses don't cater for the privacy of each generation – what if they want their own family space in the future? The designs of most houses don't plan for the future."

"These owners wanted homes that would take care of the people living in them now and also incorporate the growth of the family into its DNA."

In the smaller house, two criss-crossing flights of stairs were constructed in the centre of the home. The built-up area here is 6,135 sq ft.

One staircase leads up from the main entrance and dining area on the first level to the master bedroom and study on the second level. The second level houses a family recreation area and the 19-year-old daughter's bedroom.

The other staircase links the media room, which is at the back of the house on the first level, to two bedrooms on the second level.

One bedroom belongs to the home owner's mother, while the other belongs to the 22-year-old son.

In future, one of the two staircases can be closed up on both sides to create a separate living space and a private entrance. This would help create a "house-in-a-house", says Ms Wu. The media room would be converted into a living room with a kitchenette, while the two bedrooms would be part of the stand-alone unit.

It cost \$1.34 million to build the house.

The bigger house, which was built at the same time as its neighbour, sits on a piece of land that tapers into a triangle at the back.

The first floor is occupied by the home owner's mother, and the living and dining rooms. There is also an 8m-long pool.

The home owner, his wife and their two sons have their rooms on the second level, while the attic is used as the children's study and play area. It cost \$1.68 million to build the house.

The owner plans to purchase a small empty plot of land at the back of his house to build an annex if his sons decide to live with him when they have their own families. His current house just caters for the existing members.

For both houses, Ms Wu used different materials on the facade to "divide" the house according to the different generations and new additions.

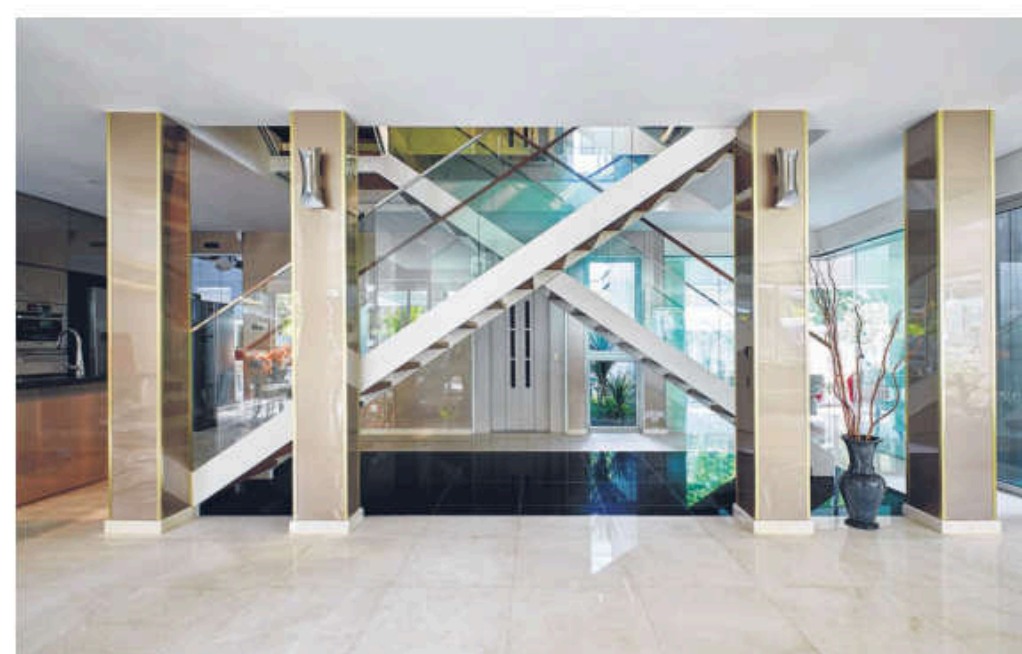
For example, in the smaller house, conwood – a natural wood replacement concrete panel – is used on the facade to highlight the part of the house that will be carved out in the future.

In the bigger house, the new attic floor and its roof are clad in an off-form, timber-grained coloured concrete, showcasing the new part of the house.

Ms Wu says: "Both houses are multi-generational now though they showcase two families at different stages of their lives."

"The manifestation of each house's architecture depends on the owner's needs and wants, but both are forward-thinking."

The bigger house sits on a piece of land that tapers into a triangle at the back.



One of these criss-cross staircases in the smaller house can be partitioned off in future.



The 22-year-old son's bedroom loft (far left) in the smaller house.

The facades of the two multi-generational houses.



Small on the outside, big on the inside

Architect Warren Liu's house may be sandwiched between two single-storey terrace houses in Opera Estate, but it hardly feels claustrophobic inside.

Wind flows easily through the house, thanks to large openings in the facade at the front and back of the house.

Instead of windows on the second level, Mr Liu, who is the principal of architecture firm A D Lab, opted for mechanised shutters.

These come down when the family turns in for the night or when it rains heavily. Otherwise, they are up most of the day and help enhance the home's openness.

These shutters are also used on the third level, where there is a recreational area.

The house is so open that birds have flown through it. Mr Liu, 48, who lives there with his architecturally-trained wife and their two children aged 10 and 12, says: "Big windows would have cost a fortune and shutters are a practical, cheaper option. We get so much sunlight here that there's no need to rely on artificial light as much."

There is an airwell in the centre of the house that acts as a wind conduit and channels cool air down.

Although the house sits on a site area of about 1,400 sq ft, it feels bigger than it actually is indoors, thanks to tiered levels linked by short flights of stairs.

For example, a couple of steps down the living room takes you to the open-concept kitchen and dining room.

The children's rooms and the recreation room are on the third level, while the master bedroom and guest bedroom are on the top floor.

The guest room has a steep staircase which leads you to a cosy outdoor nook parked in between the two pitched roofs of the house. Here, faux grass covers the floor.

The green-fingered architect has filled his home with plants, such as a leafy ficus tree in the centre of a water feature at the bottom of the airwell.

He built a seating area on one side of the water feature, where one can work or read. It also provides extra seating too if they run out of space at their dining table.

The front garden, which is above

the car porch, is a quiet, hang-out spot with a view of the street below. Leafy green plants shield the family from passers-by.

The stairs between the recreation area and children's rooms have money plants in hydroponic pots creeping up tension cables, which replace the traditional balustrade. There are also indoor trees planted in big pots.

Mr Liu says: "You get that benefit of being close to nature even if you're indoors. The plants also help to cool down the house."

With space being in short supply, many of their furniture pieces do double duty: A couch in the recreation room can be turned into a pull-out bed, while a treadmill has a built-in desk and can be converted into a bench when needed.

Mr Liu also got creative with the bathroom in the master bedroom. It is housed in a glass box but outsiders cannot look in as one-way mirror glass was used.

He did this so that he would not have to put up brick walls, which would occupy more space than glass.

The entire house cost about \$800,000 to build from scratch.

Mr Liu was able to use the space so creatively that he even managed to fit in a 2.2m-wide pool next to the dining room.

He says: "Even on a small plot of land, we managed to do quite a lot, and still keep the space open and bright."



The master bedroom opens up to a balcony (above). A roof pitched with faux grass muffles the sound of rain. ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM

The dining room (left) shares space with an open-concept kitchen and a pool.



Architect Warren Liu (above) in his living room, which is connected to an outdoor garden.

Pops of green lighten the grey, rough plaster facade of the house (left).