

Move



Where the city living is easy

Built five years ago, this award-winning duplex in the heart of Dublin showcases its urban surroundings in sustainable, contemporary style, says *Grainne Rothery*

When Sandra Schmidt Lopez-Laguna and her husband, Alvaro Lopez-Laguna Guerrero, arrived in Ireland from Madrid on expat contracts from Banco Santander in 2010, the plan was to live and work in Dublin for two years. Twelve years on and they're finally packing up and heading back to Spain with their two Dublin-born children, five-year old Felipe and Isabel, who's three.

They're also selling the very stylish city pad – No 12 Grattan Court East – that's been their home since 2017. "We were living near Stephen's Green until I got pregnant and we realised we needed to

get a bigger house in order to fit an increasing family," says Schmidt Lopez-Laguna. "We found this place, which was just being built. I found it very interesting and very modern. I really loved the architecture and the area so we decided to buy it."

Location was a big selling point for the pair. Grattan Court East is a relatively quiet road just off Lower Mount Street and about 300m from Merrion Square. "Both my husband and I are really city kids. He grew up in Madrid and I grew up in Stockholm. We like not having to commute or sit in traffic jams all the time. We don't even own a car.

"From here we can walk everywhere.



Sandra Schmidt Lopez-Laguna and Alvaro Lopez-Laguna Guerrero with their children, Felipe and Isabel, are selling No 12 Grattan Court East, above

My husband works on the next street and I work by Stephen's Green. The kids' schools are a five-minute walk from here and there are great parks nearby. Our life is in the city centre and we're close to everything."

So much so in fact that Schmidt Lopez-Laguna walked to the National Maternity Hospital on nearby Holles Street when

Continued on page 12 →

23

THE LIGHT
SIDE
HELENA
DUGGAN AND
HER BRIGHT
IDEAS



Move



Clockwise from left: one of the house's three bedrooms, which have polished concrete flooring and built-in wardrobes; the kitchen has a marble island and granite countertops, the west-facing floor-to-ceiling window in the open-plan living/ dining room has views to Grattan Street

→ Continued from page 11

due to give birth to the couple's two children – and walked home again. “City living at its best,” she says.

Their house, which is for sale through Owen Reilly for €1.025 million, is part of a development of seven homes designed by Ailtireacht Architects/DTA Architects and completed in 2017. Earlier this year, the scheme – which is clad in red brick and blends in nicely with the surrounding buildings – was highly commended for its design by the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland.

With 140 sq m of accommodation over ground and first-floor levels, No 12 is one of two duplexes – its counterpart is directly above it. Next to them are five four-storey townhouses. The duplexes wrap around the corner of the street – their shared parking area at ground level and huge living room windows face onto the road and down to Grattan Street.

The property is entered via a carport/ garage area with two parking spaces and electronically controlled glass doors at the front – plus a glazed pedestrian door – and three red-brick interior walls. The back of this space is open to the light and the elements at the top and has a gravelled area with large pots providing a splash of greenery. On the left are the entrances to No 12 and its neighbouring duplex, which shares the carport space.

Inside the front door, the entrance hall has a polished concrete floor with a

platinum grade finish, a storage unit and – like the rest of the house – white walls. Two double bedrooms are off the hall, along with a walk-in storage room and the family bathroom, which has a walk-in shower, blue marble countertops and a large backlit LED mirror. One wall of the shower is a floor-to-ceiling frosted glass window that faces onto the gravelled area in the garage. The bathroom also has access to understairs storage.

Both downstairs bedrooms have polished concrete flooring, built-in wardrobes and doors to a courtyard garden. A stairwell with gorgeous iroko wood stairs leads to the upstairs landing. The main event up here is a large open-plan kitchen/living/dining room with semi-solid washed oak flooring and that floor-to-ceiling window and its striking street view. On the other side of the room are east and south-facing windows.

“We have really big windows in the living room from all sides so we get morning sun and we get evening sun and you can see the full street,” Schmidt Lopez-Laguna says. “I think it's a very good set-up to have the living space up here.”

Open-plan living has suited the family very well, she says. “Nobody disappears into the kitchen to cook so we do everything together. I find that very nice instead of being completely away from each other all the time or having a house that has very long corridors that just takes

“We get morning sun and we get evening sun and you can see the full street”



up square metres for no reason at all. The layout is very smart in terms of our style of living.”

The fully fitted kitchen has dark laminate units, granite countertops and a marble island plus integrated appliances that include an Indesit fridge-freezer, a Neff oven, microwave and induction hob, and a remote-controlled Faber extractor fan. Off the living space is a utility room with an integrated washing machine, a separate dryer and wall and floor units.

On the other side of the landing is the main bedroom suite, which has more of that oak flooring and a waist-high horizontal window running along one wall. Off it is dressing room with lots of wardrobe space and shelving and access to the en suite, which has a walk-in shower and the same marble countertops as the downstairs bathroom.

The property has photovoltaic solar panels and gas underfloor heating with digital thermostatic controls and an A3 energy rating.

The couple made a few minor tweaks ahead of moving in, including to the kitchen layout. “And we changed the bathroom floor and added some details, such as splashbacks in glass that we liked. We changed the wardrobes as well.”

Since then, they've had the courtyard garden professionally landscaped – it now has limestone paving with a pebble surround, planted borders and a climber running along the back wall.



Clockwise from below left: doors from both downstairs bedrooms open onto the private courtyard, the en suite shower room features the same blue marble countertops as the family bathroom

Now, another job opportunity is taking the family back to Madrid. “Considering the ages of the kids, we thought maybe it's time to go back home to see our family again before they are really into school. It will be nice for them to get to know their cousins. Because my husband is from Spain and I'm from Sweden, it's been quite hard to see friends and family.”

The family's new home in central Madrid has a similarly contemporary style, which is important to Schmidt Lopez-Laguna. “Houses are quite difficult to find in the city centre so we're going to an apartment and it's a little bit bigger, but it's still the same modern bathrooms and modern kitchen. You know the Nordics – we're really into clean lines and whites and greys and not having clutter. It's about making life easy and creating a sense of calm.”

Schmidt Lopez-Laguna says the thing she will miss most about Ireland is the people. “The people here are amazing. I think I know half of Dublin – you see the same people over and over again and it's just so friendly. I will really miss that.”

“It's also great to be in a capital that's quite small. As a visitor you can see the city centre in four days. You cannot do that anywhere else. And if you want to do a getaway on the weekend there are so many things that are so close by that are beautiful. You just rent a car and you can really see a lot of nature. It's great for the kids and it's a great place.”

“We love Ireland and that's why we've stayed here for so long. We simply have an opportunity that came up and we said, yes, let's do another adventure.”

owenreilly.ie

“The layout is very smart in terms of our style of living”

