

bridge and tunnel

Lofty aspirations led one Brooklyn family—faced with no yard but with overhead space to spare—to build a play area high above their hallway.

Some kids get a new toy when their siblings are born; Satchel Beer got a loft. When his parents, Cheri Kroon and Ken Beer, learned they were expecting a second child three years ago, they bought the apartment next door and embarked on an expansion. The project was the perfect excuse to build Satchel, now 7, a big-kid retreat all his own. “Children are always trying to find a little space within their space,” says Kroon. “We thought that once Satchel had a little sister, he might really need to get away.”

The narrow footprint and high ceilings inspired local architect Alden Maddry, whom Beer and Kroon enlisted for the remodeling, to make that retreat an elevated one. “Thinking creatively, you realize how little of your space is actively used,” Maddry says. His “secret passageway” consists of a bridge (accessible by a ladder) running from Satchel’s room across a hallway, where it connects with a thin loft.

In the future, the crawl space will offer the family ample room for storage. But for now—as Satchel and, increasingly, 3-year-old Nora scurry around up there—it’s used strictly in the interest of play.



LOFT RULES

- 1 No throwing anything down from (or up to) the loft.
- 2 No jumping off the ladder from higher than the fourth rung.
- 3 No socks allowed when playing—too slippery!
- 4 No food allowed!

THE WORD FROM ON HIGH

COOKIE | What’s your favorite part of your room?

SATCHEL | When I’m up on the ladder looking down on it. I crawl out on the bridge, because I can peek into other rooms or spy on people in the hallway.

C | What else do you do up there?

S | Once I slept up there. It was only a little scary—it felt like sleeping on a floating bed.

C | What’s with the little door between your rooms?

S | Nora likes using it all the time. I hold up my Uglydoll in the door to make her laugh.



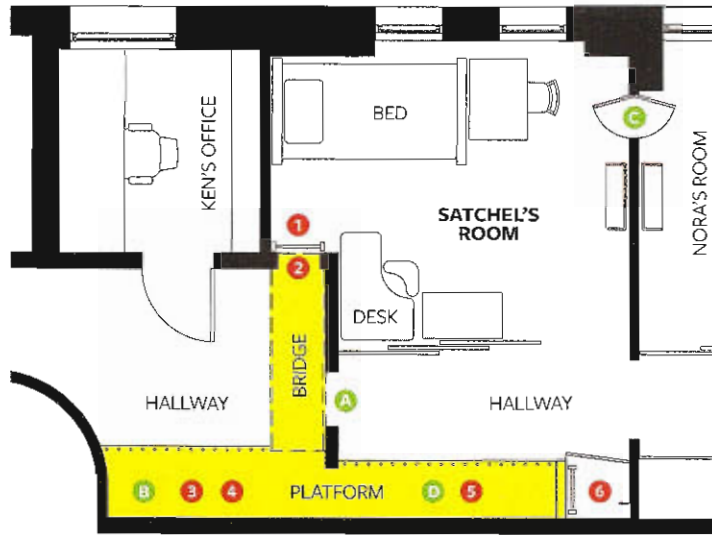
THE LAY OF THE LAND

This bird's-eye view of Satchel's elevated play space shows the T shape of the structure (below, in yellow). The bridge, which has solid-wood sides, connects Satchel's bedroom ladder to the narrow, banistered loft overlooking the hallway.

A
VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE
This "surveillance window" offers Satchel a perfect lookout over the hallway below.



B
BRIGHT IDEA
Because Satchel loves to read, Maddy installed a light fixture in the loft, with a fluorescent bulb that stays cool to avoid burns.



C
JUST HER SIZE
A tiny, Wonderland-like door connecting Nora's and Satchel's rooms is strictly off-limits to adults.



D
STORAGE SOLUTION
The kids stash toys under the platform; modular drawer units keep them looking tidy.

1
A ladder beside Satchel's bed...



2
...leads to the wooden bridge.



3
The reading nook occupies one end.



4
The bridge opens onto this platform.



5
A banister prevents any falls.



6
A second ladder hides behind a door.