



Big Design Ideas for Small Homes

There are any number of reasons families might want to make better use of the space they have in their current or new home. As a family grows, their lifestyle changes, and space for storing toys or doing homework is at a premium. Multigenerational living, where elderly parents, grown children or other relatives all live under the same roof has become common. Or it may just be cosmetic, and the best way to keep clutter at a minimum.

Home builders and remodelers are responding to the demand by maximizing the utility of living spaces without sacrificing visual appeal. With creative storage and built-in features, dining rooms can become home offices or a game room in minutes, living rooms can be used for family meals, and foyers can store much more than coats and umbrellas.

In new home construction, smaller-scale, walkable communities have become popular. To accommodate the size constraints of a skinny lot, homes are being designed with features like stacked garages where two cars can be housed trunk to hood instead of side by side. Using flexible walls, attractive flooring material and a roofless interior garage space, the area can easily be converted to a patio for entertaining.

Improved energy efficiency of windows and doors means homes now feature more indoor-outdoor connectivity. Moveable walls and outdoor spaces tucked within the home's floor plan provide for better flexible use of the space, as well as improved privacy in densely populated areas.

The often-unused space under a stairwell can be engineered to accommodate filing cabinets or drawers, or even to create a sanctuary for the family pet complete with a bed and gates to close it off. Drawers built into stair risers are a great place to store small items such as gloves and hats or art supplies.

The trend extends to home furnishings as well. Murphy beds, where a piece of furniture conceals a bed that can be set up for sleeping in few minutes, have been around for many years. Modern murphy beds are hidden not only in armoires or bookcases, but new designs feature beds that lower from the ceiling electronically at the touch of a button, or fold out from inside a desk or counter.

Other creative, multi-purpose furniture designs include dining tables that convert to a billiard table, bookcases that contain fold-down chairs for when you're entertaining more than the usual number of friends and family, and cocktail tables with trays that pull out for eating in front of the television.

Contact the Brown County Home Builders Association at (920) 494-9020 or visit www.bchba.org to learn about more trends in home design, or to find a home builder or remodeler to create the home of your dreams.