

Creating space in your home can solve problems

You don't need to build an addition to get more space from your home

If you feel like all the living space in your home is steadily being gobbled up to meet your family's changing needs, then maybe it's time to take a long, critical look at your surroundings.

In the past, when people started to feel cramped in their homes, they tended to move on to bigger, more spacious dwellings. But today, more and more homeowners are choosing to enlarge their existing living quarters rather than relocating to new surroundings. They're also looking at ways to make more efficient use of available space — particularly in large urban centres.

So if you're starting to feel a little hemmed-in, keep in mind that there are many options available. The most obvious choice, of course, is to add an addition. When built to blend in with and complement your original home, an addition can add to its value and beauty.

However, building an addition — particularly a large one — may not always be possible, either due to local bylaws or a lack of land.

If you have a tiny lot and you're thinking of expanding, you'll have to decide whether or not you're willing to sacrifice most of your available outdoor space to add onto your home — providing of course, that you

can obtain the necessary permits to carry out your plans.

Some owners of small properties choose to expand their homes upwards, by adding an additional storey. This type of renovation can turn a small bungalow into an attractive, more spacious home.

Using Existing Space

The other alternative is to tap into existing and often-wasted space, such as your basement, garage or attic. These areas of your home can give you an additional one, two or three extra rooms without the bother of having to build an extension. And all basics are already in place.

Before you start making plans however, check your with your municipality to see about restrictions and permits. Most projects require a permit. Make sure you explore this carefully before proceeding with any work.

Basements & Attics

Your basement is a veritable goldmine for expansion. This is usually the first part of a house homeowners look to when considering expansion. Basements are popular areas for family rooms, hobby rooms, entertainment areas, spare rooms — even home offices.

When insulated and moisture-proofed, basement rooms provide a unique hideaway from the main activity centres of your home.

If your basement is already finished and you still require more room, you may want to consider renovating your attic.

Depending on their size, attics can also provide extra space for a busy, growing household. When fitted with skylights and dormers, they need not feel small and confining.

If you're seriously thinking about this possibility, you'll also have to consider how this portion of the house will be accessed. Obviously, you won't want to have to go through a bedroom or closet to get to his extra living space. Also keep fire safety in mind when planning attic conversions, or any home improvement projects.

Before you embark on any particular plan, it's a good idea to consult with the appropriate experts to see what types of options are available to you. If lack of storage space seems to be the main problem in your home, and you're faced with a restrictive budget, you may decide to merely convert your attic into a more accessible and efficient storage area, instead of an elaborate family room or guest suite.

If you have a garage that is attached or

part of your home, you may want to consider turning this space into extra living space. Garages are generally roomy enough to create an extra room or two — or even an accessory apartment. Again, it's imperative to check local building code restrictions before you start planning, to make sure this type of conversion is allowed. Then get several quotes from contractors to make sure your plans are within your budget.

Other Ideas

You can expand your living space in many other ways as well. For example, you could add on a small solarium to an existing family room or kitchen to create additional space and bring more light into your home.

If major renovations aren't within your budget limitations, consider visually expanding your living quarters, by adding skylights, or extra windows. Often, the removal of a wall can do wonders to open up a room and create a "roomier" atmosphere.

Remember that no matter what route you take, it's important to make the space you do have work for you. If you have a lot of nooks and crannies, for instance, consider installing built-in storage units. You'd be surprised at how much space can be freed up by an organized storage system.

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