

How growing families can create more space

Many people will admit that home ownership tops their lists of long-term goals. Finding a home that is affordable may require moving into what many real estate agents bill as a “starter home.” But the arrival of a child, and then more children thereafter, could make a home that was perfectly functional for two or three feel too close for comfort.

Anyone who would like to raise a family in the future might want to consider certain factors when choosing a residence or designing living spaces. A home that can grow with life changes can truly be a forever home. The following strategies can expand space when a family grows.

- **Declutter.** It is important to go through belongings regularly and remove anything that is no longer needed. This can be the first step to free up physical space in a room or the home in general. Donate any items that still have utility.
- **Reassess your existing storage.** Look at different ways to maximize existing storage. Utilizing vertical space is one way to do so, so an investment in shelves, hooks and storage systems that maximize space in an upward direction can get items off the floor. Make use of storage under the stairs or in eaves. Loft beds with open space underneath are great for children’s rooms because they maximize floor area.
- **Think about toy storage.** Children love to play with toys, and once kids are in a home, toys will accumulate quite quickly. Have a plan for keeping toys neat and stowed away when not in use. Under-the-bed storage, toy armchairs (that are secured to the wall) and furniture that can double as storage, such as storage ottomans, are ideal.
- **Revamp a closet.** Although closet space may be at a premium, particularly in older homes, a closet can be turned into a nook to hold a desk for a homework station or remote office space. Compact and organized, it’s easy to hide away when not in use by closing the door.
- **Utilize room dividers.** Open floor plans have been the norm for some time. But at some point as a family grows, privacy and multi-functional spaces may be needed. It can



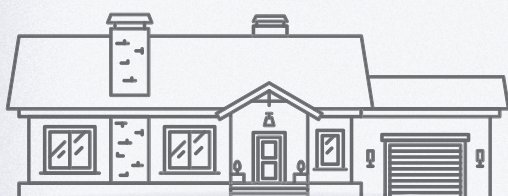
be costly to put up permanent walls, but bookcases or pieces of tall furniture can be used as room dividers to cordon off areas as specific spaces, like a child’s play area.

- **Convert a basement or garage.** Garages and basements have a reputation for being catch-alls for storage boxes and holiday decorations. However, such rooms have plenty of potential as functional living spaces. Invest in transforming a garage or basement into a room that can grow with the family. At first it may be a play area for young kids. Afterwards, it can be a gaming or homework hangout. As children grow older, spaces can be converted to a family media room. Having this extra space can free up room in the rest of the house so people can enjoy alone time when they need it.
 - **Maximize outdoor space.** A yard or another outdoor space can add valuable square footage to a home. A covered patio or deck can make the outdoor areas more usable throughout the year and zones can be created for family meals, play and relaxation.
- A family home will need more space as the years go on, and homeowners should keep that in mind when making renovations or choosing a property.

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GUIDE TO Popular Home Styles



Ranch

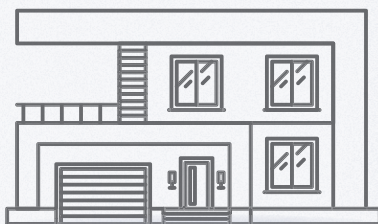
FEATURES:

- Single story
- Open floor plans
- L or U shaped layouts

Modern

FEATURES:

- Geometric lines
- Large windows
- Elevation changes



Cape Cod

FEATURES:

- Gabled roof
- Central staircase, chimney
- Shingle siding

Cottage

FEATURES:

- Smaller house
- Asymmetrical design
- Leaded windows



Colonial

FEATURES:

- Steep roof
- Central front door
- Symmetrical design

Farmhouse

FEATURES:

- Rural location
- Large porches
- Plank hardwood floors

