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100s of ideas

Real Kitchens

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Problem Kitchens & Baths Solved

PROS maximize SMALL

SAVE $$$: new materials we love + can't-fail custom looks
Scandinavian tones refresh a 1905 townhouse

To bring light into a 25' wide, 1905 Victorian, architect Jonathan Feldman and his wife, interior designer Lisa Lougheed, reconfigured the main area into a more open, flowing plan. The small kitchen at the center of the layout was opened to a hallway on the interior side, to a dining room and family room at opposite ends, and to a new bank of windows along its outside wall. To avoid upper cabinets blocking natural light, Feldman arranged for storage to be low or along the former hallway wall. Lougheed fronted most cabinets in glass for light, picking a wavy type popular in Victorian times. To add a modern twist, she chose whites and grays: distressed oak floorboards act as a strong contrast and anchor. To distinguish the kitchen, Feldman built glass-fronted cabinets between the dining area and kitchen, and a multilevel shelf at the other end.
You want to boost your kitchen or bath’s function, especially if it’s small, but sometimes the features you wish to add simply don’t fit. What the pros know, though, is that expanding the footprint to the outside or taking over an adjacent interior space—even a few extra inches or feet—can make a huge difference. The expense will depend on several factors: labor costs in your part of the country; whether the addition involves more than just one level; and what appliances, fittings, cabinets, tiles, etc., you pick. Here’s how to get started:

DEVELOP A WISH LIST. You may not get everything on it once the job is bid out, but it’s easier to scale back than to add on after the plan is finished and in blueprint stage or under construction. To develop your list, think about how you use the space under ideal circumstances; why you’re adding on; how long you might stay in the house or condo to warrant different costs; and what might appeal to future homeowners, though that should not be your primary motivation. Also push yourself to think about where you can cut back. If you’re still going to have somewhat limited counter space in your newly enlarged bathroom, you may be able to get by with just one sink, for instance. If you really want a special but costly tile, go with that and be more cost-efficient with the vanity, or vice versa.

DECIDE HOW MUCH extra square footage you really need. The average cost of building today varies tremendously in different parts of the country and according to choices made, but it is a pricey decision. Before beginning the process, carefully calculate factors such as how much more counter space you need; how many linear feet of cabinetry will give you adequate storage; how much space that round table and six chairs you want may require, along with aisle space for walking; how big the shower with bench must be to give you the spa feeling you’ve sought. Also, historically, the most efficient kitchen layout was the work triangle, with the sink, refrigerator and range at its points; however, many now prefer different zones for cooking, serving and cleaning. Ask your professional how much space you’ll need in either case. For a bathroom, instead of a separate shower and tub, you might consider a Japanese-style “wet” area, where the two are placed adjacent to one another without a wall, which conserves space and costs.

CAPTURE NATURAL LIGHT. Always think about the direction of the light and about capturing as much sunlight as possible. Kitchens and bathrooms are two rooms where you’ll spend a lot of time, and the more light you bring in, the more pleasant you will find them. If you are able to choose, it’s best to place a sink in front of a window for views and a cooktop facing out into the kitchen, so the cook can mingle. Similarly, try to hide a toilet if there is a dark area of the bathroom.

CUT COSTS SIGNIFICANTLY by retaining the arrangement of the bathroom plumbing, if possible. Ideally, locate new toilet and sink fixtures in the same places as the old ones were, swapping in your updates. Moving the fixtures requires changing the infrastructure, which may mean new plumbing lines, which are costly. It’s always more expensive to move a toilet than a sink, if there has to be a choice. It’s also always smart to have at least one tub in a home or condo for resale, so be sure you don’t remove them all.