

COUNTRY ALMANAC®
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TRENDS

BY BARBARA BALLINGER

Top designers agree: Small is the new big!

Mega-mansions may be on the decline as more homeowners are eager to downsize and cut housing costs as well as maintenance chores. Even some first-time homeowners think only smaller spaces make sense—less square footage to decorate and remodel. Whatever the reason, the hunt continues for ways to magnify diminutive spaces. Mirrors, large-scale patterns, natural and artificial light, frameless glass shower doors, furniture pieces that float off the ground and neutral palettes are timeless ways that still work to make spaces look and live bigger than they are. And the easiest surefire trick? Less clutter, say our pros. By trying any of these ideas, you'll feel like you've gained a bigger footprint. Fool the eye once, twice or all 10 ways!



EXPERT: RICH BUBNOWSKI “When space is tight, give everything its own area”

PHOTO: Tracy Harman



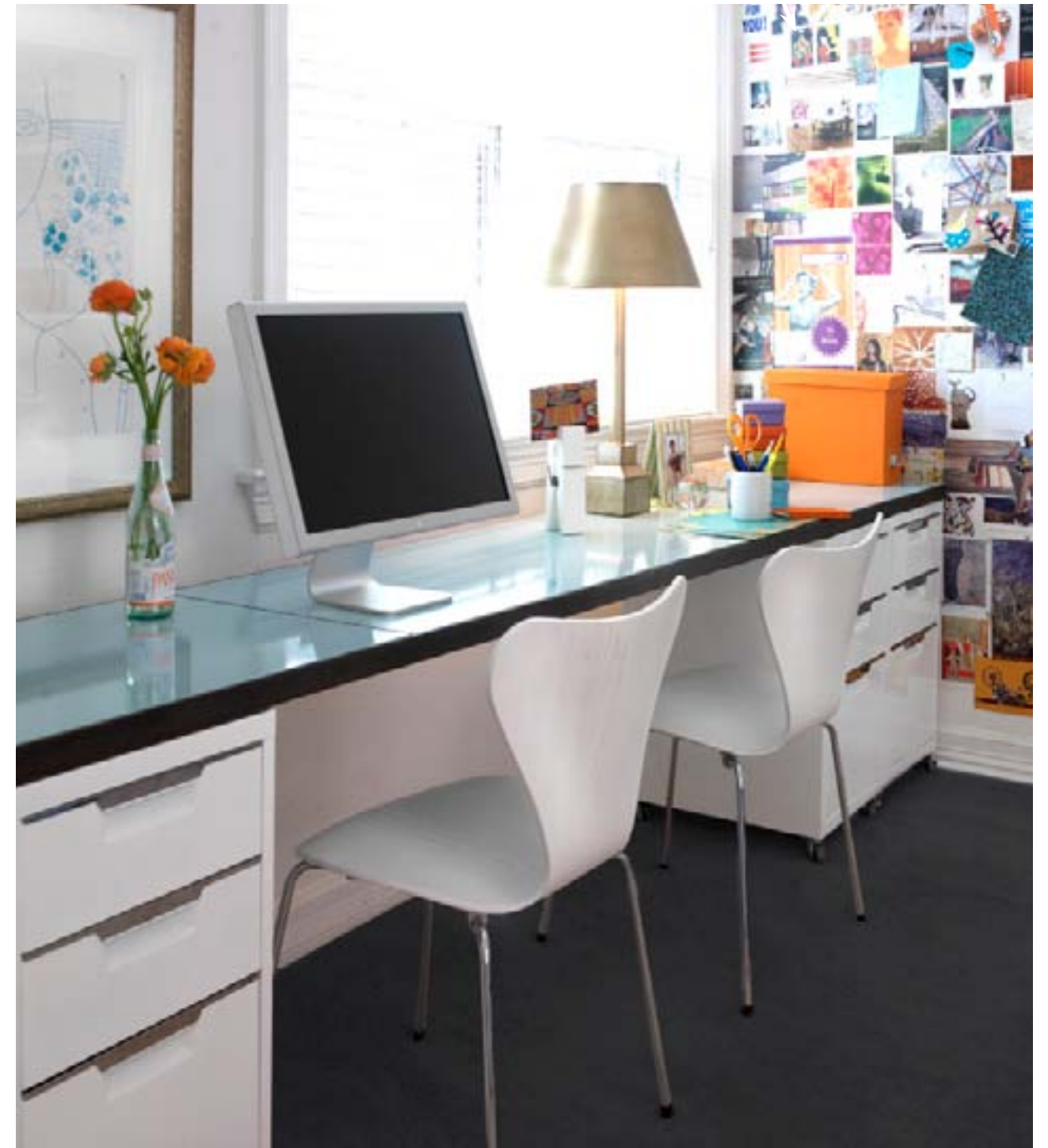
1 Updated reclaimed-oak storage. Although it was a great waterfront property, the 1,800-square-foot house in Harvey Cedars, New Jersey, presented a dilemma: How to provide sufficient storage within rooms without obscuring the water views? Architectural designer Richard Bubnowski and interior designer Donna Grimes used interior walls for cabinets and closets. In the kitchen, they gave the homeowners the reclaimed-oak storage they wanted, dividing it into organized shelves, drawers and cubbyholes to keep everything neat—an essential when space is tight. Because the owners also wanted an eclectic style, the designers mixed the reclaimed wood, which looks like something found in a barn, with fluted glass for some cabinet fronts. *Photo: Sam Oberter Photography, LLC*

EXPERT: JANE WAGGONER “Play up one piece you love even if it’s expensive”

PHOTO: Peter Chollick



2 Personalized office space. Dallas, Texas, designer Jane Waggoner believes in using a mix of high- and low-design elements regardless of whether a space is large or small. In her own office, she had her almost-11'-long desk custom made from metal. The piece was constructed in three sections and topped with inexpensive MDS board, which was sprayed with automotive paint in a soothing robin's-egg blue. It's large enough so she can spread out papers and design samples, with room to also have a client or colleague sit side by side, Waggoner says. She also brought in two classic Knoll chairs, a good task lamp by Dallas designer Chipper Nelson, affordable file cabinets from cb2 and a tack board for inspiration. Additional features that make the office inviting include a big window to let in natural light, a framed piece of art and fresh flowers. *Photo: Andrew Vracin*



EXPERT: TRACY L. MORRIS “Add space and air by lightening floors”



3 Mirror, mirror on the console. A narrow hallway with an open stairway in a two-story Georgetown home had just enough space to fit the homeowner’s existing mirrored console. “We were going to put it in a bedroom, but we found that it helped open up the space,” says Bethesda, Maryland-based designer Tracy L. Morris. And its generous storage within made the piece the go-to place to stash linens, candlesticks and everything else needed in the adjoining living room, where space was at a premium, says Morris, who worked on the project with interior architect and developer Isabel Lanier.

4 Lighter and longer. To make a small open living area with a big soffit and the adjoining kitchen and hallway seem larger, designer Tracy L. Morris, whose eponymous firm is based in Bethesda, Maryland, lightened the hardwood floor. “If you go darker it will shorten the ceiling by about 6” vertically, and we wanted to do the opposite and make the ceiling look 6” taller,” she says. More tricks to expand space: a monochromatic color scheme of beiges and grays, lower-backed upholstered seating in the living area and no wall between the kitchen and living area, though the peninsula counter offers some division. Morris also left the brick wall exposed to warm up and add texture to so much neutrality.

Photos this page: Angie Seckinger



EXPERT: DAVID KILJANOWICZ “Open a room to another for space-enhancing views”



PHOTO: Kim Capacelatro

5 Open sesame. Post-and-beam construction requires careful room layouts because of the visible structural members, but sometimes they provide an extra plus, as in this house. Designer David Kiljanowicz of The Kitchen Company in North Haven, Connecticut, used the geometry of the construction technique as inspiration in a pass-through from a small kitchen to a living room beyond, which opens the space to views and light. Because of the cathedral ceiling, kitchen cabinets couldn’t run all the way to the ceiling, so Kiljanowicz ran some handsome molding around the room and left the space above for practical storage for baskets. Barn-red paint makes the cabinets pop; they are complemented by gray-and-black-veined granite countertops. *Photo: Olsen Photography*



6 Minimally enclosed. Most designers and real estate pros recommend homeowners keep at least one tub in their home for resale, even though most people prefer taking a shower to a bath. To satisfy that need and make a city master bathroom look larger, designer Norma S. Zeiger, ASID, of Entwine Interiors in Chicago, Illinois, designed a tub-shower combination with French-style curved glass doors that also allow easy entry. Also to expand the space visually, she eliminated a full wall and used just a half or pony wall, which she painted blue, a favorite color of the homeowner, and which matches the top portion of the wall. For more zip in the mostly white and beige bathroom, she ran tiny glass mosaics around the shower and on the floor. Another luxurious touch: Zeiger included a big rain head and handheld shower spray.

Photo: Jennifer Mau



EXPERT: MARY JO FIORELLA “Small spaces demand as much glitz as bigger ones”



7 Make it glamorous for guests. When her clients asked designer Mary Jo Fiorella of Fiorella Design to create a glamorous guest powder room that would resemble a boutique hotel’s bathroom in a tiny space, she knew she had to pick small fixtures but upscale materials and lighting. In went a single-bowl vanity, a small toilet and a glass-doored shower. But on one wall went metallic mosaic tiles in bronze—from floor to ceiling; they provide wow and shimmer. She covered walls and the floor in a soft complementary Jerusalem Gold limestone, which seems to disappear. The whole room is reflected in the oversized framed mirror, while handsome sconces light all. *Photos: Greg Piche*

8 Clean as a whistle. Despite homes getting smaller, homeowners still want a place to do laundry that is preferably on the first or second floor rather than in a basement. In a small kitchen, designer Cheryl Kees Clendenon of In Detail Interiors in Pensacola, Florida, borrowed a closet to house a stacked washer and dryer, so that it can be concealed when company comes over; a cabinet above can be used to stash detergents and other products. Because the house is old and was built well, Clendenon didn’t need to deaden machine sounds with insulation. A table nearby is the perfect place for folding clean clothing. *Photo: Storybook Studios*



EXPERT: MICHAEL MALONE “Conserve bathroom space with a wall-mounted fixture”



9 Jewel box bathrooms. Powder rooms are often the gems of the house—they treat guests and homeowners to a wonderful, rich visual experience, even when they are tiny. In this Dallas, Texas, home, architect Michael Malone of Michael Malone Architects Inc. remodeled a small space under the entry stairs into this shimmery, sophisticated bathroom with the help of homeowner Megan Lembcke and interior designer Robin Riddle. Instead of a traditional vanity, there’s a mahogany base with elegant rope-turned legs and a crisp white sink. To conserve space, the faucets were installed on the wall. To expand the look more, an oversized silver frame houses an oval mirror that reflects light, which comes from two sconces as well as a nearby window. *Photo: Darren Looker*



10 Multiple functions. When space is at a premium, rooms and areas have to serve multiple roles. A corner of a living room in a San Francisco house was designed by Mary Jo Fiorella of Fiorella Design to be a cozy eating area with a round table, chairs and a banquette. But when more people come over, the table can be pushed into the center of the room. Fiorella also transformed the stairway luxuriously with cladding and a new railing; its side gained a second purpose with cubbyholes that display the homeowners’ glass collection. *Photo: Greg Piche*

