



experiences, which will typically pay less than the salaries they achieve later in their career. On the other side of the generational timeline, grandparents may be living with their children not only to help care for grandchildren but also to be cared for themselves, relieving the burden of the cost of home payments post-retirement.

For families investing in a long-term home, a layout that is adaptable to the different phases of the residents' lives can be very practical. In Madrid, Spanish architecture studio BURR transformed a 100 m² (1,080 ft²) space to meet the changing needs of the family who owns it. Occupying the ground floor of a former commercial space, the property consists of two separate dwellings; renting out one of the apartments helped finance the renovation costs. The apartments are separated by a thick, non-supporting wall that serves as an acoustic barrier and can be partially or entirely removed to reshape the space as needed, depending on the future economic resources of the owners

Left Three generations fit around this built-in dining table. Right A verdant glass-lined corridor creates a buffer between the street and the house's private areas.



entails having less space that costs the same or more than larger homes that are further away from the city. Whether a financial necessity or a conscious decision, living in a small dwelling can enable families to dedicate more of their budget to things other than housing and avoid having to make the major commitments that go along with owning or renting a larger property. It might also be one aspect of leading a simpler lifestyle: shedding material possessions can help us free up more emotional room for personal relationships and well-being.

Of course, a family can include adult children and extend beyond the nuclear family to comprise a larger constellation of relatives. In many places, young adults live with their parents to save money while completing a university degree or gaining their first professional

or the expansion of their family unit. Storage solutions are installed throughout, particularly in the main kitchen, which makes full use of the high walls. The interior remains in dialogue with the original industrial use of the space, revealing bare bricks, walls, and floors in concrete gray, while simple wood installations underscore the mutability of the space.

Privacy is another crucial issue when there are multiple family members. Having a place to retreat to, however small or symbolic, can provide mental relief for all ages. For a very small family home in a downtown residential area of Nada, Japan, FujiwaraMuro Architects used clearly defined spaces to balance a sense of privacy with the feeling of connection and openness. With the home occupying a 22 m² (238 ft²) footprint on a 37 m² (398 ft²) plot, the architect



can be solved by constructing a small annex suite, with basic amenities such as a separate bath and kitchenette, or a stand-alone dwelling—the classic images of a teen appropriating the garage as their private domain, the “granny flat,” or Canada’s “laneway houses” come to mind. Thanks to modern prefabrication techniques, accessory dwelling units (ADU) are gaining in popularity, packing the amenities of a home into a compact space. In Sydney, Australian architect Trias Studio and FabPreFab, a boutique prefabricated housing developer, teamed up to design Minima, a compact 20 m² (215 ft²) living space made from prefabricated cross-laminated timber (CLT). The multi-purpose, modular unit can be used as a mini dwelling, studio, or home office. The small dwelling configuration designed by Trias contains a host of practical and space-saving solutions. Its open-plan interior features a bed and a dining table/desk that can both be folded into the wall when not in use, to create extra space. The built-in sofa hides storage beneath it, while

discreet shelving wraps around the upper wall space. A skylight in the bathroom brings natural light into the small, enclosed room behind the kitchen. The choice of CLT, made from fast-growing timber, is environmentally friendly and is used not only on the facade but also on the interior walls, floor, and roof, giving the unit a clean, streamlined look. Sliding doors in the same material enable the living area to be closed off for added privacy.

Left Pull-up compartments in the floor allow easy storage for toys. Right Bunk beds allow children privacy in the same room.



of concealed storage that holds a desk and computer cabinet for the working day, and then folds out like origami to stow away the work equipment and reveal a large flat-screen television. A similarly inventive retractable screen extends out of the kitchen wall, unfolding to form a table that seats six.

It might not always be possible to hide office accoutrements completely, but some designers have created solutions that put them out of view. In Anna & Eugeni Bach's Barcelona apartment, the installation of a wooden furniture unit to hold the kitchen created space to suspend a desk from the building's exposed beams, creating a useful working area, as well as an innovative design element. In Atelier tao+c's U-Shape Room in Shanghai, the desk sits on an upper level overlooking the living room, its structure incorporated and semi-concealed within the composite piece of furniture that has redefined the whole space.

Louis Denavaut's Paris apartment overlooking Saint-Roch floats a glass desk on a glass mezzanine next to a huge oak-framed window, creating an extraordinary workspace that blends seamlessly with the whole. Sam Klemick's bright L.A. studio makes a feature of her profession, with her sewing table and inspiration wall taking up one side of her small home and most of the furniture being of her own design.

For a 30m² (323ft²) home-cum-office in Paris, Bän Architecture was not interested in seamlessly blending work and leisure; instead, the architect wanted to clearly demarcate the two areas. A semi-enclosed kitchen, living room, and mezzanine bedroom is installed to the rear, with nearly every surface painted Yves Klein blue, while up front is an all-white office, complete with plywood desks for three and a Plexiglas conference table. The two spaces share elements—the kitchen countertops have white mosaic tiles while the desk table legs are painted the same vivid blue—but the color contrast ensures the two areas remain clearly defined.

Not every job demands a desk or computer. Abaco's clients in Paris were two actors who wanted an open dynamic space in which to rehearse and perform. The resulting design left most of the floor space open, set the kitchen and sofa into the wall, and set the bed on a wooden platform that could also serve as seating for an audience. A curtain around the bed creates privacy at night while also working as a blank backdrop during a performance.

More and more, small spaces are being fine-tuned to offer everything. Husos worked with a doctor on



the renovation of his 46 m² (495 ft²) apartment in Madrid, with a brief that incorporated his regular night shifts in the ER and his heat-intolerant bulldog. The result was a highly specific design that centered around a sleep pod in the living room, somewhere the doctor could nap during the day, thus preserving the bedroom for night rest only. The pod is also useful as a spare room for friends and has a sliding privacy barrier that doubles as a projector screen for showing films.

In Melbourne, Architecture Architecture has gained a reputation for its work in the historic Cairo Flats, where its system of adaptable and fold-down elements allows small spaces to take different shapes according to their inhabitants' demands. The ingenious positioning of all the pieces—desk/table, sofa, bed, storage—within one wall unit means that the shift between work, relaxation, and sleep is a physical one, requiring the literal reformatting of the room to

Left Stairs to the mezzanine bedroom hold books and clothing storage. Right A raised platform works both as storage and desk seating.

Smart Zendo

Studio _____ Sim-Plex
Location _____ Coastal Skyline, Hong Kong
Square footage _____ 46 m² (492 ft²)

Sim-Plex was commissioned by a family of three to redesign a small urban apartment near the Hong Kong airport to create a space that combined intelligent devices with the ancient traditions of feng shui, while incorporating natural materials from the surrounding landscape.

"The spirit of Zen is the pursuit of harmony," explains the architect. "The Smart Zendo is based on the spiritual details of Zen." The ambition was to build a harmonious living space that uses ingenious storage solutions and labor-minimizing technology to turn a home into a sanctuary.

In the family, both parents frequently travel for work, so the grandmother comes to look after their son, but the original apartment had no place for her to sleep. Sim-Plex's new layout transformed the main room into a flexible space that can be reconfigured in different ways including, through concealed sliding doors, into a third bedroom.

The installation of a wooden deck in the living room allows the floor to double as storage, with compartments in the platform

accessed by pull-up doors. By the window, an electronic coffee table rises on demand from the floor (and just as seamlessly disappears), providing a spot for working or tea ceremonies that makes the most of the apartment's extraordinary views.

Both bedrooms prioritize storage. A vanity mirror is concealed in a drawer next to the main bed, while the integrated drawers in the son's room double as a desk chair. But the space isn't just functional—the wooden window frames also reference the feng shui principle of balance, using a natural material to offset the technology elsewhere.

Hardware such as voice-activated synthesizers, electronic clothes hangers, an electronic table, a smart toilet, and multiple televisions define the modernity of the space but never to the exclusion of the world outside.

"Although the traditional feng shui aesthetics and smart technology seem to be contradictory," Sim-Plex says, "if applied properly, they have their compatibility."



Left Almost every surface, including the floor, incorporates storage. Right The curved bench and stool fit seamlessly under the kitchen counter.



Left A smart coffee table rises from floor level to offer a space for the tea ceremony. Top Right The bedroom enjoys both extensive storage and light. Bottom Right Marble walls bring a touch of luxury to the bathroom.



Left **A study-cum-lounge area.**
Top Right **A platform of raised storage also works as the desk seating.**
Bottom Right **The bed has extraordinary views over the Hong Kong hills.**