



The Big Potential

OF SMALL BATHROOMS

by **Madeleine Maccar**

Hall bathrooms, guest baths and powder rooms might not have the space to accommodate all the flashy splashes of personality and luxury that a main bathroom can, but area experts have lots of advice for and insight into making the most of those less-used lavatories.

Everyone wants to turn their main bathroom into a lovingly detailed, spa-like escape featuring all the amenities and coordinated color palates that elevate the home's most in-use bathroom into an opulent retreat.

But what about powder rooms, hall bathrooms and guest baths?

While a home's smaller spaces might present some limitations their larger counterparts don't, there are still plenty of options for upgrading and refreshing your smaller or less frequently used bathrooms without sacrificing style, space or superior construction.

"I don't really consider them any dif-

ferently because, regardless of the size of the project or the location of the project, the detail and the quality should always be the same," says Anthony DellaPia, president of Floors Just for You. "Whether it is a powder room or a luxurious master bath, we treat them equally."

"Unless you're trying to redo all your sewer lines, it's really the same thing as working on a larger bathroom," agrees Santiago Lima of Lima's Handyman.

DellaPia and a few of the region's other bathroom redesign professionals recently spoke to House & Home about how they approach these projects and advice for homeowners looking to focus

their attention on a homes' smaller washrooms.

Same Quality, Different Mindset

It is crucial to approach those smaller projects with the same degree of care, attention to detail and desire to deliver a dazzling finished product for each and every client, though there are obvious limits and differences that come with redesigning a bathroom that isn't the main bath, the latter of which is used almost exclusively by the heads of a household.

"There is a different approach that's not necessarily based on size as it is the usage," notes Doug Mottershead of McHales Inc., a certified designer who's been with the company for 16 years. "Typically, it's a couple who's using the master bath, and not many other people are going into it; a hall bathroom is used by their children, whether they're small children or adult children; and the powder room is used by everyone, including guests."

"I've seen a lot of projects through the years and, in most cases, when people have hall bathrooms, they're primarily used for children or guests, and there's a big division between a personal bathroom that you use

for yourself and your significant other versus one that's used by the kids," agrees David Cerami, owner of HomeTech Renovations. "The mindset is, do you take your kids to a five-star restaurant? Most people are looking to their hall baths a little more reasonably rather than making the major design statement they would with their master bath."

Contractors are quick to note that when homes are built, their half-baths tend to be designed with streamlined piping and architectural configurations in mind, rather than occupants' ease of use and design flourishes. Since those bathrooms are often basic, builder-grade quality, renovations can range from adding individually selected adornments that reflect a homeowner's taste to updating their overall quality of materials.

"Most builders, when they build a home, they're not building it for state-of-the-art design: They're building it for how quickly and inexpensively they can produce one bathroom, so changing out a bathroom usually means more of an upgrade than people realize," Cerami says. "When the homeowner moves in, they're enamored with their new home and not thinking about how their bathrooms were built, or understanding that the materials that were chosen are typically less than what you would want to select if you were to design it yourself or were advised about other alternatives than what you inherited with your home."

"It can be a challenge because you have to take time to re-pipe in for a new shower or a new tub or a new toilet, or move the toilet out of the way in order to get a nicer layout," adds Lima.

Making the Most of Small Spaces

Before a project can even begin, taking stock of the entire home to ensure a harmonious redesign is paramount.

"People will go on Pinterest or home-design websites and say, 'I want this style,' and it can be



very pretty, but, as a designer, you have to tell them why it doesn't go well with their home—you don't want a bathroom that overpowers the house," says

Guy Ndandji, owner of F+S Kitchen and Bath Design. "You want a bathroom proportional to the look of your overall home."

The very nature of home remodeling projects makes each job as unique as the homeowners, their lifestyle, their tastes and the changes they're looking to make.

"It all depends on the customer when it comes to things like hall bathrooms and master bathrooms," Mottershead points out. "There's two different approaches: Some customers want to put their money in the master bathroom they use every day. Others, since the master bathroom is only for them, they don't care about it as much, so they focus on the guest bathroom."

"You are a little limited with selections of fixtures just because you don't want to overpower a smaller area," DellaPia adds. "A lot of people are looking for more durability because they usually are the bathrooms for kids, and it's more of a simple design and basic finish than the exotic ones you'd see in a master."

For guest bathrooms and powder rooms,

those lesser-used spaces present an opportunity to showcase statement pieces that pop but might not be practical for everyday use.

"My advice to customers, when it's their master bathroom and a hall bath as well, is not to put a vessel sink in because it is a cleaning issue when you're using that bathroom every day before you go out and every night before you go to bed—they're hard to clean around," Mottershead explains. "The only place I'll ever put those in would be a powder room because, in a powder room, since everyone sees that, you're kind of trying to put your best foot forward, from a class-design approach."

With storage at a premium, there are plenty of ways to creatively maximize small bathrooms' space without compromising their aesthetics. Vanities are still in-demand and options like recessed niches offer unobtrusive storage spaces, too, though shelving remains a popular, easy choice.

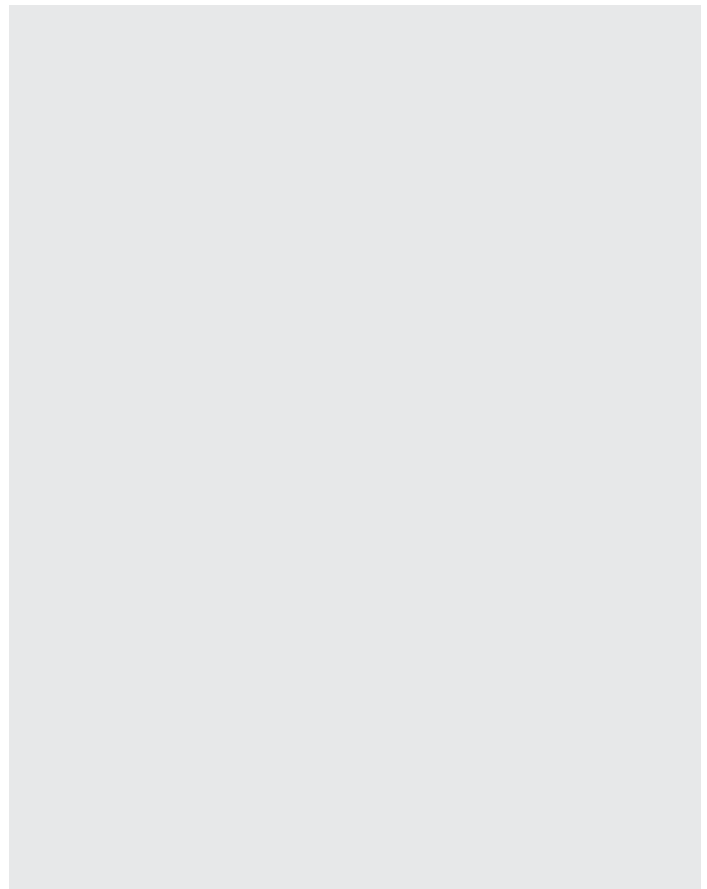
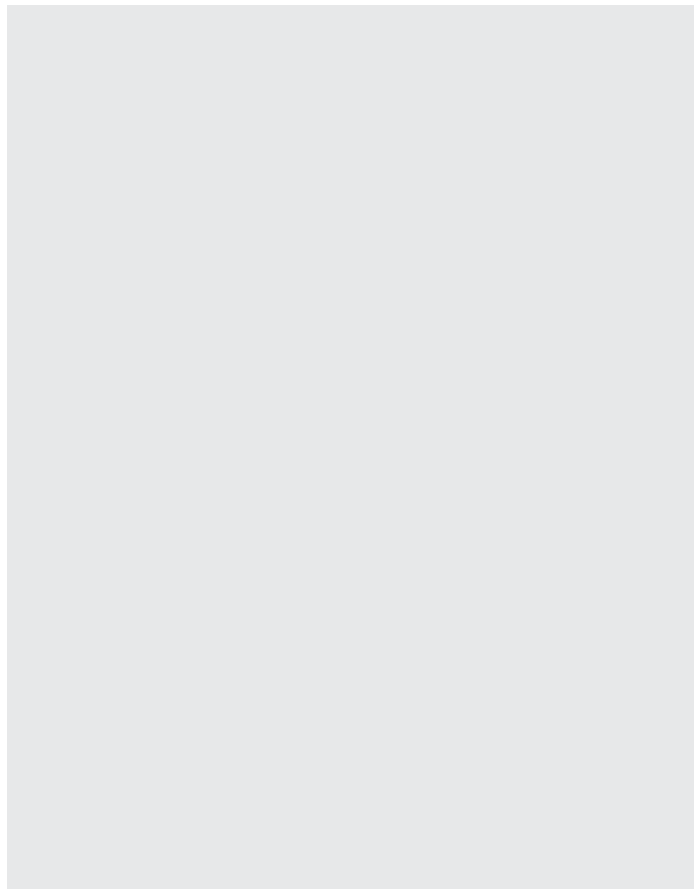
"You can only put one pound of sugar in a one-pound bag, so what we need to do is take advantage of the existing space," says Cerami. "We can give them more storage space with recessed medicine cabinets, an upgraded vanity that would offer a little bit more convenience in terms of storage, or a toilet-topper sort of cabinet—or we can build something custom in our shop, if necessary."



"If you go from a tub to a standup shower, you can gain way more space in your bathroom because the shower base is smaller, reducing almost two feet of space that a tub would need," Lima adds. "That way you can add some shelves in that space you get back right next to the shower for things like towels and storage."

If more square footage is what a homeowner is looking for, eliminating in-bathroom closets is an increasingly common solution.

"If there's a way to make a bathroom bigger, people always want to make it bigger," Lima continues. "If they have a linen closet in the bathroom, they'll get rid of that closet, which is what we normally do."





Trust the Professionals

Every project starts with a client who's eager for a change, but it's best that they wind up in professional hands. It might cost more to bring in the experts but it's a small price to pay for not only avoiding even costlier mistakes but also ensuring that you don't wind up with a project you've thrown a significant amount of money at and wind up regretting.

"The kitchen is the most expensive project within a home, followed by the bathroom," says Ndandji. "You have to make sure that you hire a true professional because a fly-by-night contractor who's not skilled enough will be problem. People who have been in the industry for a long time have the experience to bring a quality design to any kind of client."

Checking out contractors' showrooms for a hands-on comparison of options is one of the many benefits of trusting the professionals, while marrying their expertise with your taste to get a result that you love and will last is another.

"The customer can't necessarily relay to me exactly what it is that they have in their head, so it's up to me to ask the appropriate questions to draw out that information," Mottershead adds. "The best designer for your bathroom is you, not me. I'm the tool you use to get what you want but you are the person who has to live with it every day." **H&H**

Since these types of bathrooms rely more on interior lighting than natural sunlight, choosing those fixtures is an important decision. Sconces can provide an upgrade that not only add some character to a small bathroom but also create more natural light for shaving and makeup application, while opting for overhead ceiling lights rather than above-vanity ones can brighten up those spaces, too.

"We'll go in and see a very basic light over a vanity, or we won't see lighting over the showering or tub area, so we'll upgrade those designs," Cerami says. "So we frequently include additional moisture-resistant recessed lighting over bathing areas as well."



RESOURCES

F+S Kitchen and Bath Design Studio

Voorhees, N.J. | (856) 428-3800
FSKitchenAndBath.com

Floors Just for You

Turnersville, N.J. | (856) 432-6269
FloorsJustForYou.com

HomeTech Renovations

Lower Gwynedd, Pa. | (215) 646-7477
HTRenovations.com

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