

Making everything fit

The benefits of living in a small space are many, as are the challenges, but with a little nous a tiny dwelling can be big on functionality



A Glossy surfaces help bounce light around the room **B** A Trio apartment styled by Frost Design has an outdoor area that extends the living space **C** A multi-functional section with cooking facilities and storage makes the most of a limited area

When it comes to real estate, bigger is generally considered better but with a bit of ingenuity you can turn your tiny abode into a functional and beautiful home.

There are a number of reasons why people might live in a smaller space, be it an apartment, terrace or cottage – it is easier and cheaper to maintain, more affordable, a good environmentally sustainable option and likely to be closer to the city and more amenities.

Also, the current trend incorporating open-plan designs allows for more flexible spaces so you do not need as many rooms.

“There’s definitely a trend towards living in smaller spaces, especially for people who want the convenience of living near their workplace,” Frasers Property Australia’s group sales manager Adam Sparkes says.

Frasers is the developer behind the \$2 billion Central Park project (a redevelopment of the former brewery site in Chippendale) as well as the recently completed Lumiere apartments in the city and the Trio apartments in Camperdown, and is clearly banking on this trend.

“The new city dwellers eat out, work late and enjoy the nightlife of the city so they don’t need large spaces for entertaining at home,” Adam says.

“They view the city and its parks, pools and cafes as natural extensions of their apartments.

“At the same time, the internal planning of smaller apartments has become incredibly sophisticated and buyers’ expectations are higher [today], so these spaces feel larger and deliver more functional, flexible living space than ever before, often with a super-high level of finish and detailing.”

Various functions

William Smart, creative director of Smart Design Studio, has designed the interiors of a number of small apartments and studios, including several in the Lumiere building.

“If a space is very small, my general view is to look at what spaces can be overlapped and how you can make one space provide various functions,” William says.

“I also try to challenge convention on what can go next to each other or be separated.

“In one place we did a few years ago, it was a 40sq m one-bedroom apartment and the best place within that apartment was the bedroom. We made a huge sliding door to the bedroom so that it became an extension of the living room and put in a daybed that could also be used as a sofa. It became a place where you can read the paper and hang out with friends and sit on the day bed. So it was quite a nice way of interpreting that space.

“The other thing we did was condense all of the functions of the room into one long storage cupboard [with the wardrobe placed next to the kitchen].”

A good flow between an





A The colour scheme as devised by the students of the International School of Colour and Design livens up this small space **B** A skylight and simple design add spaciousness to Joel Farnan's terrace

interior and exterior area can also help maximise space.

"I think it's also important to have a nice connection to the outside where possible, again when you're working in an existing space you can't always control that. But you can use colour and material to extend an inside space to outside."

There are also a ways to visually divide an open-plan space that needs to perform a variety of functions, William says.

"I think lighting, so setting moods and zones with lighting is quite a good way of creating zones within a space, [and] floor coverings, so we use a rug to designate a nice kind of lounge area," he says.

"Big pivoting doors or fully concealed sliding doors can be a great way of providing real separation in a space. If you have a small room and you want that room to connect to the main living space then a door that tucks out of the way when it's not required gives you a generous feeling."

Logical outcome

Architect Joel Farnan recently renovated his narrow Redfern terrace (featured in our January 9 issue) and used various techniques he has applied to other small projects to maximise the space.

"We try to make the spaces as logical and uncomplicated as possible so there



are not a lot of complications and complexity to the plan. Especially not as you walk in," Joel says.

"You can't see the complexity, you just see linear things that line up and there are not a lot of niches everywhere and the walls don't turn too often. So it's about playing down the complexity, even though you're squeezing a lot into a small space."

Keeping as much of the floor visible as possible is also a good way to make a room seem bigger, which is a trick Joel applied in his terrace's bathroom.

"It's about getting everything off the floor and having wall-mounted fittings and a wall-mounted toilet, wall-mounted basin and that sort of thing and having overhead storage rather than cupboards underneath," he says.

Access to light, such as windows and skylights, is also an important part of creating a feeling of spaciousness.

"We had a round skylight above the kitchen and that's a dramatic element because the kitchen's very deep in the space," he says.

"Terrace houses are long tubes basically,

so you need to punch the light into the centre of the space where you can."

Avoid clutter

Catherine Morgan, director of Ampersand Design and a recent graduate of the International School of Colour and Design in colour design and interior styling, has some tips on how to make an existing room feel bigger by using colour and furnishings.

"It comes down to, in my opinion, four things: floor space and traffic, colours, furniture and their approach to lighting," she says.

"In any sort of room you need to avoid clutter. People have a habit of cramming stuff into a space so start leaving some negative space for the eye to rest – not packing it full of furniture – and freeing up the traffic flow. A room is only going to feel smaller if you can't move around it comfortably."

Colour can also be used cleverly to make spaces seem larger.

"The use of lighter colours makes the walls appear to recede and I think it's



autumn special

\$100 OFF

fully installed attic ladder*

*10% deposit required by 30/06/2010. Must quote "Daily Telegraph" when booking consultation. Does not include Studio model.

clean attic storage

need more storage?

Don't waste what's in your roof!

- ▶ Gain up to 30% more space in your home
- ▶ De-clutter your living spaces
- ▶ Add value to your property

Want to see what can be done with your attic space?

Book your obligation-free consultation on 1300 655 525

1300 655 525
www.atticgroup.com.au

ATTIC
GROUP

TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OF SMALL SPACES

- * Look at how one space can provide various functions
- * Select furniture with multiple uses
- * Use colour and materials to visually connect the indoors with outdoor spaces
- * Create zones within an open-plan space using lighting, colour, floor coverings and furniture
- * Play down the visual complexity of a space, even if it provides a lot of functions
- * Use windows and skylights to bring light into the space
- * Show as much of the floor as possible by raising furniture and fittings off the ground to create a feeling of space
- * Use light colours and glossy materials to help bounce light around the room
- * Incorporate storage to avoid clutter and leave some negative space for the eye to rest
- * Choose monochromatic colours with a close tonal relationship
- * Incorporate mirrors and mirrored surfaces to give the appearance of added depth



A



C



D



B

A City living offers a world of entertainment just outside the window B The light-coloured interior "opens up" the space C Lots of hidden storage areas have been included in the design D Joel Savage and Amy Murphy enjoy a simpler lifestyle

APARTMENT LIVING – THE CITY ON YOUR DOORSTEP

When Joel Savage and his fiancée Amy Murphy first decided to buy an apartment they were sceptical about how they were going to manage without a backyard.

"Amy and I came from big homes, so it was a big step for us. It was something we were concerned about," Joel says.

"But it's been absolutely wonderful, because of the communal spaces – we have a pool, a theatre and big shared spaces with wireless internet."

First homeowners Amy, 24, and Joel, 25, moved into their 55sq m, one-bedroom apartment in the Lumiere building in the CBD a year ago. Joel says they chose to buy an apartment because they wanted something affordable, close to the city and easy to rent out.

"When we found this place we fell in love with it," he says.

"I'm an industrial designer and the way the building's been built, some of the interesting features and the way the communal spaces work appeal to me."

Joel says they love their new lifestyle and are more than happy to sacrifice space for the benefits of city-living.

"We were concerned about not having a backyard but the way we see it is we've got one of the best backyards in the world. We can walk out into the city and it's just amazing – you've got the theatre, live music, The Rocks and everything you could want" he says.

The interior lay-out of the apartment – lots of storage, big windows and a

light-coloured interior – all help create a feeling of spaciousness.

"It's been designed extremely cleverly," he says.

"We went there with quite a bit of stuff, and we were worried about how we were going to fit everything into a one-bedroom apartment but there's a lot of hidden storage and the storage is usable – it's really obvious what each space is for.

"The actual flow of the room is quite logical and nothing's small, even the corridor that you walk into, it's a proper sized corridor, so you can walk through with bags and everything. It never feels like you're in a really small apartment."

Along with having the best backyard in the world, Joel lists small electricity bills, easy maintenance, the environmental benefits of using communal facilities, the feeling of community in the building and being able to walk everywhere, among the positive aspects of their lifestyle.

"One of the wonderful things about living in a small apartment is that all of a sudden your life becomes a lot simpler. You no longer have these stresses about cleaning a big place, mowing the lawns or looking after the garden. All these things are really time consuming. Now we have a lot more spare time to do the things we want to do," he says.

● MORE INFORMATION

Lumiere 1300 857 057,
lumieresydney.com.au

important in a small space to go either monochromatic or use a harmonious colour scheme with a pretty close tonal relationship," Catherine says.

"And just throw in colour and dark or lighter tones with accent pieces rather than have all your furniture different colours. Keep it pretty close together."

Scale of furniture

When it comes to furniture, you only have a limited opportunity in a small area to make a statement so it might be time to cull or invest in a few good, practical pieces.

"Scale and proportion of furniture is important," Catherine says.

"It's not about making the furniture tiny

so it looks small in the room. It's about having a few really well thought out pieces and going for something that's functional to do with the use of the room.

"Any furniture that has exposed legs or slipper chairs with no arms, anything that reduces the bulk is great. Use of reflective surfaces has been a bit overdone but they're great for enhancing that feeling of space and bouncing light around the room."

You also need to make your pieces work hard, as many can have dual functions if you choose carefully.

"Multi-functional pieces, anything that will double up as storage, such as ottomans with storage, tables with storage – anything to get rid of the clutter," she says.

Tricks with lighting

When it comes to lighting, Catherine says making the most of natural light is the ideal but adding lights can also contribute to spaciousness.

"Any light that's directed on the walls will give the appearance of pushing them out and making the room appear larger," she says.

Like the old saying "necessity is the mother of invention" a bit of clever planning and a few visual tricks will turn your small space into a great space.

"Small spaces present less of a challenge often than the big spaces. If you have a bigger space, you have to zone it, you have to fill it with furniture," Catherine says.

"Small spaces can actually be the most interesting to decorate." ■

Alice Wasley

● MORE INFORMATION

Ampersand Design 9440 5591

Farnan Findlay Architects

9310 2516, farnanfindlay.com.au

Frasers Property

Australia 8823 8800,

frasersproperty.com.au

International School of Colour

and Design 9114 5988, iscd.edu.au

Smart Design Studio 8332 4333,

smartdesignstudio.com