

BY LYNN HOPKINS

Not moving any time soon? The slowdown in the real-estate market has a lot of homeowners asking questions about their current residence. Where can we make room for a growing family by adding a couple of bedrooms? Can we carve out space for a home office? Will some artful reworking of the exterior make it more appealing to a potential buyer?

As an architect specializing in residential design, I've spent years addressing these questions for my clients. Adding square footage to a house can transform a poorly laid-out plan into something that perfectly suits the occupants, often with just a modest amount of new space. A construction project that recasts the exterior shapes of a house is an excellent opportunity to fix problems such as clumsy rooflines, poorly conceived entries, and missed opportunities for outdoor spaces.

In this article, we'll take a look at an assortment of houses that have been improved with additions both large and small. In each case, the addition not only provided the

Designing an Addition That Looks Right

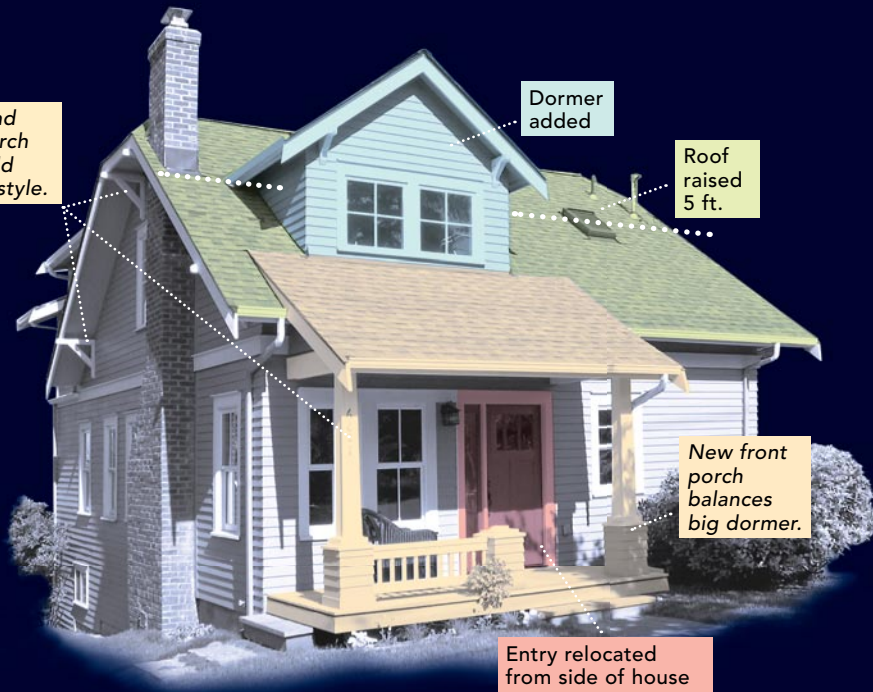


Even a small addition can make your house live and look its best

GOING UP BORROW FROM YOUR NEIGHBORS, BORROW FROM A STYLE



Brackets and tapered porch columns add Craftsman style.



Dormer added

Roof raised 5 ft.

New front porch balances big dormer.

Entry relocated from side of house

THE ORIGINAL HOUSE, a small, nondescript bungalow, had a cramped entry and odd windows (inset photo, facing page). In the walk-up attic, the roof's ridge was so low that a person could stand fully upright in only the very center of the space. When Seattle architect Jim Rymysz designed a second-floor addition (photo left) with two bedrooms, a bath, and a home office, the original roof was removed, and a new one built with the ridge about 5 ft. higher. Besides improving headroom on the second floor, the new roof respects the low-to-the-ground character of other bungalows in the neighborhood. This house still looks like a one-story home.

The new roof also borrows a half-hipped roof detail from an adjacent home. Deep eaves and an overhanging rake were part of the original house, a handsome and practical characteristic in rainy Seattle. New eave brackets play up the deep eaves and rake, transforming the home from a forgettable tract house into an exemplar of the neighborhood's prevalent Craftsman style. The tapered porch posts sitting on low, shingled pedestals further elaborate on this style.

Double-hung windows with a two-over-two muntin pattern, typical of the Craftsman era, replace the soulless casement windows of the original house. The foursquare lite pattern of the dormer windows adds another important level of detail and refinement.

The addition of a wide front porch not only creates a much more inviting and useful entry, but also cleverly balances the addition of a large dormer. Imagine how top-heavy this dormer would look if the porch weren't there. When expanding a house upward, it is important to consider how the new will affect the old. Often it's necessary to make changes on the first floor as well so that the entire house hangs together as a coherent whole.



GOING OUT

LET THE ADDITION CREATE AN OUTDOOR LIVING AREA

desired space, but it also enhanced the look of the house.

Should I build up, out, or both?

Every addition begins with a fundamental question: Where should it go? A variety of conditions influence the answer.

Whether to expand a home upward instead of outward depends on the kinds of spaces you want to add, the configuration of the lot, and the restrictions imposed by the building department. As a general rule, most public-space additions, such as living rooms, family rooms, and kitchens, are outward expansions, while most private spaces reach upward. But conditions such as views, height restrictions, physical needs of the occupants, setbacks, and terrain can trump the general rule. (The article on p. 44 shows a good example of an addition that is an exception to the rule.)

Going-up considerations

1. Rooms with similar functions want to be near one another. For instance, bedrooms want to be close to each other and to bathrooms. The living room wants to be close to the dining room and the front entry. And



Circular window, table, and paving tie the house and yard together.

Windows in clusters of three establish an underlying order.

Axis encourages long views.

THE ORIGINAL HOUSE (inset photo above) ignored the backyard. With the addition of a master suite, this corner of the house now defines an exterior space. Low stone walls, plantings, and paving that take their design cues from the house further define the outdoor room. For instance, the sitting area carved into the garden is on axis with a bay window and takes its circular form from a circular window above. The walls of the house establish the edges of the paving. Features from the addition, such as the circular window, the overhanging rake trim, and the cottage-style windows pulled together in groups of three, were added to the original house to improve existing rooms and to unify the old with the new.



A TWO-STORY ADDITION at the back of the house, built by a previous owner, ignored many of the architectural features of the original house. The pitch of the roof on the old addition looked squat because it matched the shallower pitch of the shed dormer, not the steeper pitch of the main roof (inset photo left). Also, the addition's picture windows and tall casements differed in scale, proportion, and type from the double-hung windows on the rest of the house. The heads of the taller casements on the rear of the addition didn't align with the heads of the double-hung windows right around the corner. The entire structure seemed precariously balanced on a skinny post.

GOING UP AND OUT

A CLASSIC SOLUTION OF PUBLIC SPACES TOPPED WITH A MASTER SUITE

New dormer minimizes the visual impact of the upper level.

New roofline matches main roof, not shed dormer.

Eave lines are maintained.

New windows match height of existing windows.



The first addition was retooled with one that preserves the steeper roof profile of the original house (photo below). Eave lines are maintained on both levels, which keeps this three-story structure from becoming overpowering. The uppermost level is treated as a dormer, minimizing its visual impact. The ceiling of the new addition is taller than elsewhere in the house. Transom windows take advantage of the additional height, while double-hung windows directly below the transoms maintain the head height and muntin configuration of the windows in the rest of the house.



TEXTURES AND ROOF

almost every room wants to be close to the kitchen, especially the family room, the dining room, and the garage, mudroom, or wherever groceries enter the house.

2. Upward additions with dormers can improve existing rooms by adding headroom and natural light, or they can transform former attic or storage spaces into habitable rooms if the ridge is high enough. Because these additions fit within the confines of an existing roof, the volume of the new space they can provide is limited. In an average-size house with a 10-in-12-pitch roof, the usable dormered space on the floor directly below the roof is generally about half to two-thirds that on the lower full floor.

3. A new upstairs bath or bedroom that opens directly off the stair hall is ideal. If this is not possible and you have to walk through an existing bedroom to get to the new space, consider changing the existing room to something more public, such as a study or TV area, or creating a hallway with storage closets. Although access to a bath from an adjacent bedroom is a common arrangement for master suites, walking through one bedroom to get to another should be avoided.

4. Going-up additions can be built without additional foundation work or loss of precious outdoor space, but they are the most disruptive. It can be best to move out for the duration of the project.

Going-out considerations

1. Building out might make it possible to nestle a new family room into a leafy corner of the yard, simultaneously creating a protected area perfect for a terrace.

2. Building out can block a less desirable view and provide privacy to part of the yard.

3. Rooms that serve multiple people simultaneously, such as a family room, a living room, or a dining room, generally function best when they are close to the kitchen. When these rooms are also adjacent to outdoor living areas, they provide convenient circulation for guests during social functions. These desirable connections argue in favor of a going-out addition for public rooms.



ROOFS UNIFY THE EXTERIOR

AT SOME POINT in this vintage home's history, a previous owner doubled its size by grafting another house to the back of it (inset photo). The partnership certainly increased floor space, but it didn't improve the home's looks

or circulation. Judiciously adding another 7 ft. by 35 ft. to the front and side of the house solved several problems (photo above). It provided room for an upstairs hall that doesn't have to pass through an office to get to the bedrooms, and it gave the downstairs parlor and sitting room a little more space for furniture and a piano. On the outside, the rooflines of the new addition improve things in two ways. As it wraps around the corner of the porch, the low roof breaks up the tall, monotonous facade, lowering the perceived height of the house. The low roof dies into the side of the gabled portion of the addition, which disguises the fact that the eaves and ridges on the front and back do not align. The existing roofline is maintained but now includes a third-floor dormer to accommodate a new attic bedroom. The face and sidewalls of the dormers are covered in wood shingles to match those on the roof, further disguising the fact that this is a three-story structure.

LINES DIAL UP THE CURB APPEAL

ADD A FOCAL POINT WITH CONTRASTING MATERIALS

THIS HOUSE has a bold, contemporary form; a pair of shed roofs sweeps continuously over three floors from peak to eave. However, the base of this form had been chopped out, leaving a forbidding cave of an entry with a front door hidden somewhere deep inside (inset photo). The windows seemed puny in relation to the house, and the semicircular window had nothing to do with the geometry of the house. The siding was unrelenting, with no details to provide scale and interest.

Finding the front door is no longer a challenge (photo right). It has emerged from the cave and now stands proudly on the front wall, protected by a shed-roofed canopy that echoes the shapes of the larger roofs.

Cedar shingles visually tie the door, windows, and canopy together into an entry bay that contrasts with the more subdued vertical siding on the rest of the house. This two-story entry bay is sufficient in scale and detail to serve as a focal point among the simple, bold shapes of the house. Other details add refinement, such as the wide/narrow/wide horizontal pattern of sidewall shingles, the upstairs window muntins, the V-groove front-door paneling, and the standing seams on the metal canopy roof.



DON'T LET THE GARAGE DOMINATE THE HOUSE



THE STREET FRONT of this postwar Cape had been disfigured by an insensitive addition above the garage (inset photo). The garage's blank front wall, squat side windows, and odd roofline all combined to disrupt and overpower the modest charm of the original house.

Lowering the ridge of the garage made it subordinate to the house (photo left), and filling in the missing piece beneath the cantilevered room allowed the garage to grow enough to actually accommodate a car and simultaneously look more rooted to its site.

The divided-lite proportions of the multipaned windows over the garage door and next to the front door further unify the street view.



EVEN SMALL ADDITIONS



GIVE A CRAMPED SPACE
A LITTLE BREATHING ROOM,
AND MAKE A GOOD ROOM BETTER



ALTHOUGH A REALTOR might have called the existing space a bedroom, it was barely large enough for a bed, and it didn't have a closet. Adding a 5-ft.-deep bump-out to the upstairs bedroom provided that much-needed closet, sufficient space to walk around the bed, and room for a chair in the corner.

Directly below this bedroom, the first-floor living room was large enough, but the connection to the backyard was circuitously routed through a screened porch (inset photo). And the only place for the homeowners' piano was in front of some built-in shelves. The new arrangement of French doors and high windows provides light and access to the backyard, and also creates a place of suitable importance for the piano. The columns that support the second-level bedroom extension create a nice porch off the living room, and a gracious transition between indoor and outdoor living areas (photo above).

4. Going-out additions substantially affect the existing room or rooms where the new construction attaches to the house. Windows likely will be eliminated and circulation disrupted, making it necessary to compensate for these losses.

For example, if a new family room attaches next to the kitchen, then the kitchen should be configured so that people can access the family room without disrupting kitchen workflow. Often, it's desirable to open up the wall between the two rooms so that the kitchen can borrow light and views from the family room, effectively making it an exten-

sion of the new room. Another strategy is to put functions that don't require natural light in these now interior spaces, such as closets, a pantry, a laundry, or a powder room.

5. Although going-out additions require new foundations and result in a loss of outdoor space, they are typically the least disruptive to living in the house while construction proceeds.

Consider going up and out

The most cost-effective projects often combine both upward and outward expansion, generally with a family-room addition/kitchen

expansion on the first floor and a master-suite addition above. This type of project adds the spaces missing from many older homes: a large room with good access to the outside connected to an updated kitchen, plus another bedroom with generous closet space and an additional bathroom. The living, dining, and sleeping spaces of the original house remain relatively undisturbed. □

Architect Lynn Hopkins (www.lhopkinsarch.com) is based in Lexington, Mass. Photos and projects by the author, except where noted.

CAN YIELD BIG RESULTS



EXPAND A ROOM WITH A SITTING BAY

IN DENSELY POPULATED TOWNS, zoning laws can make it tough to add floor space to a house by bumping out a wall if it extends into the required setback from the lot lines. But in many of these same jurisdictions, bays that do not add floor area and that extend no more than 2 ft. beyond the exterior wall plane are exempted from square-footage calculations. Thus, sitting bays offer expansion possibilities for zoning-tight projects.

In this example, Bay Area designer Lance Alden Johnson enhanced a kids' playroom by adding a comfy nook for cushions, bordered by multipaned windows. This inviting focal point, awash in daylight, amounts to a major expansion in both feel and function.



The bay is 2 ft. deep by 5 ft. wide. It is supported off the wall by angled brackets wrapped in an envelope of stucco-coated ogee-shaped architectural foam (inset photo).

By the way... a little trim makes a big difference

A shed dormer on the back of the house gave the side of the building an odd shape (photo above). The addition of rake trim with a generous overhang restored the simple gable profile of the original house (photo below). Now the dormer looks like a dormer. Gable trim and overhangs on the addition continue the theme of simple peaked roofs, keeping the new in scale with the old.

REPLACE ONE WINDOW WITH TWO



WINDOWS AND WALL CABINETS battle it out in many older, smaller kitchens. Homeowners want more light in the kitchen, especially at the sink, but they don't want to sacrifice wall space where upper cabinets can often provide the most convenient storage. An

oriel window can be the solution. This triangular bay window doesn't take up any more wall width than a conventional window, yet it almost doubles the amount of light in the room and provides views in two directions instead of just one.

