

homefinder

ASK A REMODELER

Turn unused space into most-used space

Question: I have an unused area in my home. It seems like wasted square footage. What remodeling ideas would you suggest?

Answer: This is a great question. We recently worked with an Indianapolis family who told us they wanted to add a cabana to their home. They have a lakeside property with a pool, and they were always bringing the outdoors inside — including wet towels, wet feet and messy food and drinks. The couple thought they'd have to add on or create a new structure in their backyard.

Here's how we discovered a plan to repurpose unused space. My business associate — Gary Nance, a conceptual designer — works with a lot of families who own lake properties. He understands the unique challenges of accommodating water views and water play.

When we went into our first meeting with the homeowners, he and I had a lot of questions. But first, we toured their home to learn how they were using each space. Then we sat in their dining room to learn why they wanted a cabana.

As we started talking, Gary and I asked our questions: What do you like



Gray

about your home? How do you use different rooms? What do you dislike about the house? What rooms aren't used? What ideas do you have for the cabana? During the conversation, the couple told us they rarely, if ever, used the dining room we were sitting in. That same room overlooked the pool and lake.

We talked and listened for about an hour. Then the thought hit us: Would it instead of adding on or building we converted the dining room into usable space? The room had a wet bar that could be converted to a food and drink station. There was enough space to add a bathroom. And the room was accessible to other parts of the house, so it could flow into the kitchen and front entry. Converting the room was more efficient and economical, too.

Based on this example, homeowners who are looking at unused spaces should ask a series of questions:

What is it about the space that makes you not use it? In our client's story, we

learned that they are very casual, so they didn't use a formal dining room. They needed a casual space to handle the wear and tear of outdoor activities, yet also serve as a functional entertaining area.

How do you live in your house? If you're an informal family who enjoys casual backyard barbecues, chances are a formal dining room will collect dust. If you like to read, for example, you could turn that space into reading room instead.

What inefficiencies in your home could be corrected during a renovation? In our clients' example, the family told us they didn't have a great view of the backyard, pool and lake from the kitchen. They also didn't have a welcoming view of the front door from the old dining room-turned-cabana. During the renovation, both inefficiencies were corrected.

Is this a do-it-yourself job or do you

need help? You can take the project to the next level by finding the right professional remodeler and making the job a great investment. Professionals will ask questions and listen to you first. They will know what to ask to ensure the final plan and ideas are what you want. They'll be honest about what could work in the space to maximize livability and resale value.

Before you begin planning what to do with unused space, remember this: A remodeling project is only as good as the contractor and subcontractors who oversee and complete the job. Interview the team you ultimately hire to be sure your satisfaction is high from start to finish.

★ Steve Gray, owner of Steve Gray Renovations, is a member of the Builders Association of Greater Indianapolis. If you have a remodeling question, e-mail it to indypubswriter@indystar.com, or mail it to: Ask a Remodeler, The Indianapolis Star, P.O. Box 145, Indianapolis, IN 46206-0145.

DREAM HOUSE

1890
year built

5
bedrooms

2.5
baths

6,058
square feet

3
-car garage

ETC.

Federal style home on three lots in historic Lockerbie Square has copper gutters, a carriage house and has had two recent additions.



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» **WHERE:** 527 E. Lockerbie St., Indianapolis
 » **ASKING PRICE:** \$1,750,000
 » **CONTACT:** David Piccolo, Century 21 Scheetz, (317) 814-3283
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