

— MULTIGENERATIONAL LIVING —

How to Grow Your Home

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and other add-ons are booming as we move in together—young and old, family and friends. Here's how 8 families adapted their homes to welcome new additions **BY DAVID HOCHMAN**



MOM'S NEW COTTAGE

The integrated outdoor space includes a roomy shower, *far right.*

A HOUSE SWAP FOR THE AGES

Durham, North Carolina

WHY: After Janice Cook's husband died in 2019, her 1,600-square-foot, three-bedroom house felt too big.

Marilyn Griffin, her only child, who lived nearby, knew her mother was too vital to think about retirement communities. "We wanted her to live well in a smaller space," says Marilyn, who works in health care. Both she and Kevin, a director at a biotech company, were thinking ahead to their own retirement now that their adult kids had left—and they loved the idea of living mortgage-free.

HOW: After a series of "frank conversations," Marilyn says, "and a few meetings with lawyers," adds Janice, the title of Janice's house was transferred to Marilyn and Kevin, and her assets were shifted to them as

well. Janice would get to age in place without any bills in a beautiful home built alongside her former house—paid for by the Griffins' real estate sale.

WHOA: "An arrangement like this takes serious trust and faith, so it's not for every family," says Janice.

WOW: With both parties free from paying a mortgage, the home swap lifts one of life's biggest burdens for the family. Plus, Janice gets to enjoy her later years in a very cool new house.



HOMEOWNERS

Marilyn Griffin, 53, and her husband, Kevin, 56

NEW ARRIVAL

Marilyn's mom, Janice Cook, 74

HOME GROWTH

The Griffins moved into Mom's house; Mom moved into a detached 650-square-foot, one-bedroom cottage they built on the back lawn.

APPROXIMATE COST

\$205,000



A TINY HOUSE FOR 'GAGA'

Portland, Oregon

WHY: When she wrapped up her teaching career a few years ago, Peggy LeDuff knew Southern California would be too expensive for retirement. Oregon looked cheaper, and the allure of living close to her adorable granddaughter—Norah, now 2, who calls her “Gaga”—proved irresistible.

HOW: “I offered to watch Norah and any future grandchildren three days a week if I could roll in a tiny house,” Peggy says. Karen Fejta’s reaction: “Free babysitting? Uh, yeah!” Peggy sold her 980-square-foot studio in Los Angeles. After meeting with several tiny-house builders, she opted to have hers custom designed. “I was very organized with all the details,” she says. “I wanted a built-in dresser,

a small closet and loads of windows. There is a sleeping loft overhead and a full-size pullout couch below for when I no longer want to climb. I like to cook, so my kitchen has plenty of storage. And we designed the living area around my grandparents’ old china cabinet.”

WHOA: Running a sewer line required complex trenching around tree roots to the (unexpected) tune of \$15,000.

WOW: “Having Gaga nearby is pretty magical,” Karen says. “We all have dinner on Monday nights. She has her book club here. Norah adores her, and it’s such great support.” Says Peggy: “It’s almost like I should pay them because I get to be the grandmother I always wanted to be.”

HOMEOWNERS

Karen and Paul Fejta, both 34

NEW ARRIVAL

Karen’s mom, Peggy LeDuff, 64

HOME GROWTH

Adding a 311-square-foot tiny house on wheels for grandma—a.k.a. “Gaga”—to Karen and Paul’s backyard

APPROXIMATE COST

\$91,000



A BABYSITTER IN THE BACKYARD
Peggy with her granddaughter Norah; Gaga’s place, right.



John Clark (3)



AN INEXPENSIVE CABIN OUT BACK
Robert revels in both the quiet, left, and drop-ins from his family

DAD'S WOODY REFUGE

A rural mountain community outside Ashland, Oregon

WHY: When Brint Borgilt and Juliet Grable, a writer, bought their property in 2015, Robert Borgilt, a retired Xerox repairman and Korean War-era vet, moved into his motor home next to their 1,500-square-foot house. Four years in, he broke his hip. “He clearly needed a safer place as he got older, so we built the cabin,” Brint says.

HOW: The 1970s outbuilding had connections for electricity and plumbing, but everything else got scrapped. The new Craftsman-style dwelling was designed with “all the amenities of a larger home, just compressed,” says Brint, a residential home designer. That includes a full-size fridge and stacked washer-dryer, vaulted ceilings, tons of windows and plenty of lighting.

WHOA: “Dad is a hermit and values his privacy, so we had to find a way to give him a great deal of space and also get

HOMEOWNERS

Brint Borgilt, 60, and his wife, Juliet Grable, 51

NEW ARRIVAL

Brint’s dad, Robert Borgilt, 86

HOME GROWTH

Turn an outbuilding into a 400-square-foot cabin

APPROXIMATE COST

Robert put in \$70,000, then, says Brint, “we did all the work except roof, foundation, Sheetrock and exterior paint.”



the construction done. But he really enjoyed the interaction with the people who helped us build it.” The work took two and a half years.

WOW: “This project brought Dad and me closer,” Brint says. They

spend time in the property’s woodshop and sometimes eat together. “We’ll usually see each other five out of seven days a week, and I think he appreciates the work and time we put into the cabin.” Deer, foxes and the occasional cougar can be seen from Robert’s windows, and he enjoys tending to his bird feeders. “The place is comfortable and it provides for all my needs,” he says. “And I get my choice of so many views.”



Pre-renovation



IN-LAW SUITE FOR EASY VISITS
Simple changes created a new space for Chander, center.

MINIMAL CHANGES, MAXIMUM FAMILY TIME

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

WHY: “In India, parents live with you until the last minute, and that’s what I want—no nursing homes,” says Chander Verma, a stroke survivor who struggles with mobility. So daughter Prasanta Verma decided this year to create accessible space on the ground floor of her own three-bedroom home so Chander could stay for months, not days.

HOW: A bed, dresser and chair replaced dining furniture, two doors were installed, and a walk-in shower was added to the nearby laundry room.

WHOA: The permitting process was very time-consuming, and they had to consider installing a stair lift and moving Chander upstairs. Fortunately, the downstairs approvals came through.

WOW: Two of Prasanta’s siblings are replicating the idea, creating long-stay spaces in their homes in Georgia and Maryland.

HOMEOWNERS

Prasanta Verma, 55, and her husband, Vivek Anumolu, 59

NEW ARRIVAL

Prasanta’s mom, Chander Verma, 81 (on extended visits from her home in Georgia)

HOME GROWTH

Reimagining a dining room, adjoining laundry area and powder room as Mom’s summerlong guest suite

APPROXIMATE COST

\$20,000



BACKYARD CHIC
The light, airy modernist kitchen and dining area are a highlight of Karin's new space.

GRANDMA'S GLAM GARAGE

Los Angeles, California

WHY: "It was a no-brainer," says Monique Marshall, an education consultant. "After my stepdad died in 2021 and Mom's rent skyrocketed, we knew she needed to leave the New York City apartment where she lived almost 60 years."

HOW: Karin Notbom-Healey, a retired legal secretary, flew west with 10 boxes and a couple of bags and moved into her granddaughters' (two 20-somethings) bedroom—the young adults camped in the living room—as the garage renovation took flight. "We got pizza and beer and invited 15 neighbors to help clear out the junk and get it to the Salvation Army," says

DeMille Halliburton, an insurance executive. Architect friends drafted plans for a 295-square-foot studio with a bedroom nook, kitchenette, no-step walk-in shower and tiled skylight. DeMille and Monique financed the construction, but Karin insists on paying \$1,000 a month in rent.

WHOA: Building everything to code meant a new roof and new foundation—"more money and more time," DeMille says. The overhaul took nearly a year.

WOW: Proudly independent, Karin now spends her days listening to her beloved Chuck Mangione and John Coltrane records on vinyl and tending to an olive tree outside her ADU where the ashes of her husband, Billy, are scattered. There's daily family time, too, whether that's a morning walk to coffee or dinner together. "Before the ADU, we'd visit mom on summer vacations or quick holiday trips, but now she's an everyday part of the family, and that means everything," Monique says. Karin agrees: "I've never been happier in all my life."



HOMEOWNERS

DeMille Halliburton, 59, and Monique Marshall, 54

NEW ARRIVAL

Monique's mom, Karin Notbom-Healey, 84

HOME GROWTH

Transforming a garage behind the family's 1,200-square-foot home

APPROXIMATE COST

\$120,000



Gregg Segall (4)

HOUSEMATES BRIDGE THE GAP

Broomfield, Colorado

WHY: “My three adult children have homes of their own, and I didn’t want to live alone,” says Marina Lopez Del Carril. Downsizing didn’t appeal to her in the current seller’s market. “I would have had to find something small and overpriced, or moved somewhere much less desirable.” Social connection mattered too. “I thought, *What about sharing my space?*”

HOW: Online housemate-matching services like Silvernest, Furnished Finder and Travel Nurse Housing cater to boomers and make it easy to find people to share your home in the short term, which can also bring in extra income. Marina listed her finished basement apartment (with kitchenette, bath and separate entrance) on Silvernest for \$1,300 a month and had three interested parties the next morning, so she started interviewing.

WHOA: Safety was the top concern. Most share sites have integrated background check and identity verification tools, but Marina’s friends also advised her to install a kick-proof security door

between her kitchen and the basement (though she didn’t) and to be clear on her house rules, the highlights of which were “no smoking, no pets, no guns,” she says.

WOW: Marina expected to live with “a woman my age or older, I figured”—but she “really clicked” with a young guy who was relocating to town to be a school administrator, and Adam Saucedo moved in. What started as a month-to-month formal rental in July of last year has bloomed into unexpected friend-



ship and fun. The housemates sometimes cook or watch TV together, and Marina often hangs out with Adam and his friends. “Standing at my kitchen counter over jigsaw puzzle pieces at 11 p.m. with five young men, I just have to chuckle,” she says.

HOMEOWNER

Marina Lopez Del Carril, 58

NEW ARRIVAL

Housemate Adam Saucedo, 30

HOME GROWTH

Finding a basement tenant so Marina, a retired bilingual educator, would be comfortable and financially secure in her 2,800-square-foot, four-bedroom home

APPROXIMATE COST

Nominal, as the unit was tenant-ready



DOWNSTAIRS HOUSEMATE

The walk-out apartment ensures privacy for Marina and Adam.

GROWING YOUR HOME?

Consider these options.*

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT (ADU)

A separate living area on the same property, either attached or detached. (Many of

the conversions in this story, and the tiny home, may be considered ADUs.)

ADDITION The default choice for creating more living space when shy a basement or garage, whether it’s a room, a second floor or an entire wing.

ROOM SMARTS

Split up a large room or repurpose an underutilized one, such as converting a dining room into a bedroom or in-law suite.

TINY HOME Usually prefabricated, these small houses offer most of the normal

amenities but are typically up to only 400 square feet.

Conversions

GARAGE This frequently entails converting the entire garage or constructing a second-story living area while retaining the parking space below.

BASEMENT Best for more modern homes with walk-out basements. Ranges from adding a bedroom to creating a separate apartment.

ATTIC Unused attic space can be turned into an extra bedroom or family room. —Sheryl Jean

*Construction prices vary depending on location, ranging from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

AARP HOUSING RESOURCES

The ABCs and More on ADUs

Everything you need to know about accessory dwelling units: what they are, how to get started, how to push ADU-friendly legislation and much more. aarp.org/adu

AARP

Livability Index

A tool that scores communities across the country on the services and amenities that affect life most. aarp.org/livabilityindex

AARP

HomeFit Guide

This free booklet features 100-plus ideas for updating your home so it's safer, more comfortable and suitable for decades to come. aarp.org/homefit



New Video Series: *Going Tiny With AARP*

See more of the Hollingsworth/Reinbold family in this AARP Studios YouTube series chronicling real-life stories of people 50-plus using tiny homes and other downsizing projects to live better lives.

• youtube.com/aarp



ONE BIG HAPPY Opal, standing, center, has been reveling in the close proximity to her family.

BIG MOVE, SMALL FOOTPRINT

Poway, California

WHY: When Opal Reinbold retired from her career as chief quality officer for a San Diego hospital, the last thing she imagined was living in a granny flat on her kid's property north of the city. But 10 years in, she started thinking longer range, asking herself, *If this is my third act, what am I gonna do with that?* Maggie Reinbold and Brad Hollingsworth wanted her mom near-

by, not just to bring the family closer: As conservation biologists, they saw benefits for the ecosystem and for the future. "We could show everybody that you can positively contribute to the housing crisis without putting in jeopardy native habitats," says Maggie.

HOW: Working with a local ADU specialist, the couple used some design tricks to make Opal's home feel not so tiny: vaulted ceilings, mini-



mal hallway space, loads of windows, standard-size appliances and room (inside and out) to entertain.

WHOA: Maggie and Brad's homeowners association had frowned on ADUs for making lots feel crowded and their potential impact on parking. But eventually they saw that "ADUs are innovative ways to increase housing and not decrease quality of life," says Maggie.

WOW: Opal is feeling completely reinvigorated. "I am just so excited about this next chapter in my life," she says. "I have my old life, but I also gained a new one."

HOMEOWNERS

Maggie Reinbold, 46, and Brad Hollingsworth, 58, along with daughters Phoebe, 8, and Wren, 11

NEW ARRIVAL

Maggie's mom, Opal, 75

HOME GROWTH

A 498-square-foot tiny home matching—to the roof tiles and stucco—the 2,140-square-foot main house

APPROXIMATE COST

\$250,000

KEEPING PACE ON AGING IN PLACE

Atlanta, Georgia

WHY: Cary Childre, who's divorced, had been thinking her 3,000-square-foot house in the Atlanta suburbs was too big for her and her four tiny dogs. So in 2022, when her daughter became pregnant with her first child, "the conversation about building an ADU got real," she says. The sale of Cary's home helped fund the project.

HOW: Eva and Chuck Mauldin considered an addition to their home but then heard about a local architect who specializes in freestanding ADUs. "Ripping out walls and tacking on a mother-in-law suite just got too complex and expensive," says Eva. "It was simpler to build from scratch with experts who understand compact spaces." The one-bedroom ADU has high ceilings, a bright modern kitchen, a bathroom with easy-pull handles and clear entryways, and a studio for Cary's art projects. Eva and Chuck, who work in the hospitality industry, pay Cary to care for their daughter full-time. "Childcare is hugely undervalued, and



Mom deserves compensation for what she's doing," Eva explains.

WHOA: Eva and Chuck's 98-year-old American bungalow is in Atlanta's Grant Park historic district. They jumped through extra hoops for permitting, and the site's steep grade required costly support piers and a retaining wall. "We went \$70,000 over our initial budget," says Eva. (For more on ADU construction, see the July/August *AARP Bulletin*.)

WOW: It is win-win-win. Cary can age in place with no concerns about housing debt, Eva enjoys hanging out with her mom, and Cary's new granddaughter has her beloved grandma as her babysitter.

L.A.-based David Hochman is a contributing editor to the magazine and is our go-to writer for many home and housing features.

HOMEOWNERS

Eva, 34, and Chuck Mauldin, 38

NEW ARRIVAL

Eva's mom, Cary Childre, 67

HOME GROWTH

Building a stand-alone, 450-square-foot ADU behind Eva and Chuck's 1,500-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bath house

APPROXIMATE COST

\$200,000

Nick Burchell (3)



COMPACT BUT SPACIOUS

A full-size bath and vaulted ceiling make for a "big"-feeling ADU.

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