Westchester Home

These Small Space Solutions in Westchester Homes Are Brilliant

Not sure what to do with your small space? These 15-plus designers share how to make a big impact when you are short on square footage.

MARCH 11, 2024 | BY JENN ANDRLIK

ONE GOOD DEED
It's Not About the Nails

Photo by Tim Lenz

Every home has them, and they can be a struggle when it comes to finding the right design. We're talking about small spaces, otherwise known as those alcoves, corners, and pint-sized rooms that can cause us to scratch our heads in confusion. Fortunately for us, local designers have solutions aplenty, with ideas by room and style.

Ideas by Rooms

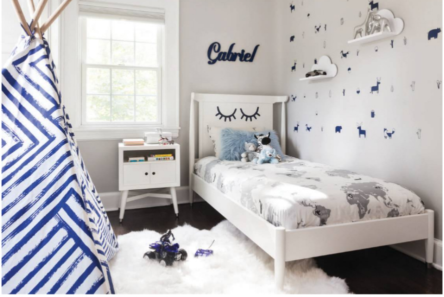

Photo by Hulya Kolabas

"Kids bedrooms are often the smallest rooms in the house, but they still need room to grow. We recently worked on a modern safari-themed bedroom. By keeping the main furniture simple and white (bed, built-in closets, nightstand), we were able to bring the concept to life withanimal wall decals, animal accessories, great colors, bedding, and custom hardware. Despite the small size, the theme is clear, and the room feels spacious and happy."
– Malka Helft, Think Chic Interiors

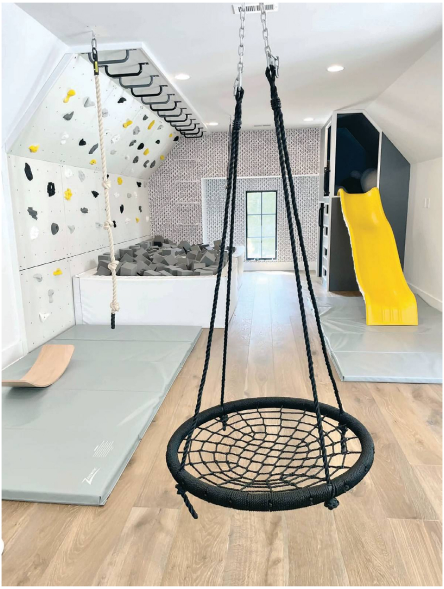

Photo by Karri Bowen-Poole

"Less is more in the playroom, for sure. In the playroom, we always suggest editing the toys and creating a simple organization system that the kids can maintain. It's always best to include one or two activities and do them well in a small space rather than trying to have an overwhelming amount of choices for the kids. My top two activities for children up to age eight would be pretend play and a movement center. For older kids, tweens and teens, I would focus on sports or climbing equipment, hanging swing chairs, as well as tabletop games, like foosball, and comfortable seating that encourages socialization, like low-lying sectionals."
– Karri Bowen-Poole, Founder and CEO, Smart Playrooms and Project Playroom

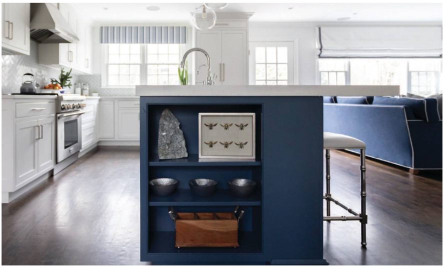

Photo by Lo Austin

"Small kitchens need to be mighty and well thought out. Do not leave a corner under-utilized but be mindful not to make it feel too light. Be sure to incorporate some open shelving or upper cabinetry with glass doors for an airy feeling. The end of the kitchen island is a great spot for open shelves to display cookbooks and treasures. Counter stools should not be too deep, look for 14" when possible, for tight walkways."
– Andrea Sinkin, Andrea Sinkin Design

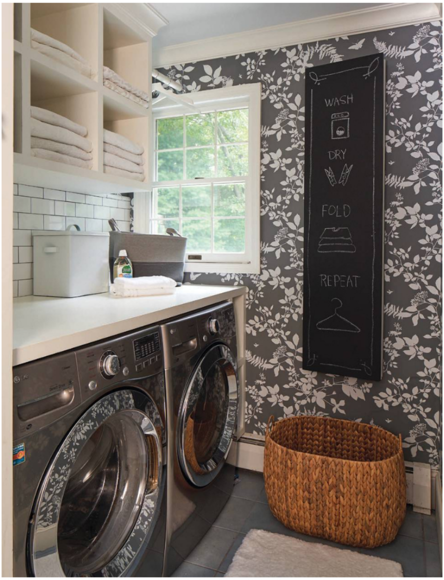

Photo by Philip Ennis

"Many years ago when I first started to read about Buddhism, I learned one of the most important steps in your practice is to be in the moment, and try to find joy, or at least peace, in whatever you are doing. The book I was reading gave an example of doing laundry, of all things. It stuck in my mind. I had heard before to be mindful when you walk, be present in just walking. When you eat, enjoy just eating. That made sense, but to enjoy doing laundry was a new idea for me. But from that moment on, every time I was in the laundry room, I tried to enjoy just doing the laundry. I soon realized, for me, my surroundings make a difference. So, even though I have a smallish laundry room, I tried to make it a special place that made me smile, instead of frown, when I walked in…and the wallpaper and cabinets that help to keep me organized, do just that."
– Lisa McTernan, Lifestyles & Interiors by Lisa

Color and Lighting

“Designing small spaces can be a fun and creative challenge. Using bold colors, interesting textures, and whimsical patterns can make a small room feel lively and unique. Here are some tips for making the most of small spaces.

Bold colors.

Don't be afraid to use bold and vibrant colors. Rich hues can add depth and personality to a small space. Consider using an accent wall or colorful accessories to make a statement.

Photo by Raquel Landworthy and Stylist Amanda Soropolous

Texture play.

Incorporate different textures to add visual interest. For example, you can use textured wallpaper, woven fabrics, or textured tiles. This can create a tactile experience and make the space feel more dynamic.

Whimsical patterns.

Play with patterns to inject a sense of playfulness into the room. Geometric patterns, floral prints, or even quirky designs can draw attention and create a unique atmosphere.

Photo by Raquel Landworthy and Stylist Amanda Soropolous

Accent wall.

If you're not ready to commit to bold colors or patterns throughout the entire space, consider creating an accent wall. This focal point can serve as a conversation piece and add a touch of drama.

Wallpaper.

Wallpaper is an excellent choice for adding pattern and interest to a small space. It comes in a variety of designs and textures, allowing you to customize the look of the room. Consider wallpapering the entire room or just one accent wall.

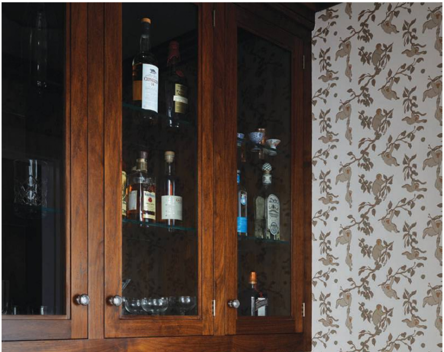

Photo by Raquel Landworthy and Stylist Amanda Soropolous

Remember, the key is to balance bold choices with thoughtful design to avoid overwhelming the space. Experimenting with color, texture, and pattern can transform a small room into a vibrant and inviting oasis."
– Kerry Jacobs, Manor + Woods

"One trick I like to do is to make everything in the room tonal. This will make the room feel larger as well. [And don't put] too many objects or too much furniture in a room. Even in a larger space, clutter will make the room seem smaller. Remove the small pieces and then add back thoughtfully."
– Denise Davies, D2 Interieurs

Photo by Jane Beiles

Photo by Jane Beiles

“Take into consideration the natural light in the space, and if you do not have any natural light, make sure the wallpaper or paint and the lighting you select will help bring the space to life.”
– Wendy Strauss, Strauss House Design

“Small spaces can be big design moments. They are a great opportunity to test the waters with print, color, or a trend that you may be too intimidated to try in a larger space, and you can typically do more with a smaller budget. It’s like dipping your toes if you are afraid to dive into the deep end! I love to keep these spaces cozy, with built-in seating and shelving to maximize space. This window seat is a great example: It was previously just a large radiator cover, and the family found themselves using it as a “dumping ground” to put all kinds of stuff throughout the day; it was just a forgotten pass-through in a hallway. But after adding a beautiful cushion and pillows, and some decorative shelving, this has transformed the entire home, and is now a focal point you see right away. Rather than letting it be a boring hallway, it has become a design moment that adds pattern and color to the other rooms that join around it.”
– Kristen Kells, Kristen Kells Interior Design

Photo by Julie Leffell

“Our best tip when working with a small space is to design it around natural light, if possible. It’s a powerful tool that can change the whole feel of a room. Consider making the window a focal point and add mirrors to the space, which will enhance the brightening effect. [One of the biggest mistakes made is] using singular-purpose items [which] tend to crowd a space. We recommend incorporating pieces that are multifunctional. For example, adding a table behind the sofa can double as a sofa console and a desk space.”
– Barrett Oswald, Barrett Oswald Designs

Photo by Tim Lenz

Photo by Tim Lenz

Furniture and Accessories

“When it comes to accessories, don’t go too small. For instance, a rug in a living room should be

large enough to fit under the entire sofa, not just the coffee table. A tiny rug in the center of the room serves no purpose and makes the space look smaller. Additionally, drapery that doesn't reach the floor or starts right above the window can make a room appear shorter, rather than taller."
– Malka Helft, Think Chic Interiors

Photo by Regan Wood

"When I'm designing small spaces for my clients, I love to use built-ins. In my latest office project, I designed a custom executive L-shaped desk in a white-oak finish. My client works remotely, so I positioned the desk under the window so natural light would make him look good on camera for video conferencing. The custom desk works with the sloped ceilings, not against them. Plus, there is plenty of room behind the desk for a seating area so his office can double as a man cave. Custom built-in shelving provides storage and a charming backdrop for his daily video meetings."
– Judith Heimowitz, 7B Design

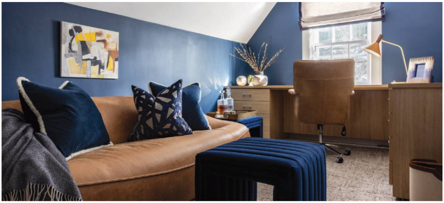

Photo by Julie Leffell

"Less is more. Select pieces with lots of functionality (think: drawers) and maximize your elevation where possible (build up to the ceiling if necessary); use the walls for storage [like] floating shelves. Be proactive by creating a floor plan, which means you need to measure the room, space out where you are placing the furniture, and plan ahead to make sure everything will fit into the space. Prioritize purchasing furniture with a dual function. For example, select an ottoman with hidden storage; ensure key items that need to be stored have a home and can be tucked away to minimize clutter. People often make the mistake of buying items before doing their research and realizing after the furniture is delivered that it won't work. I recommend planning ahead to avoid all that frustration."
– Elana Tenenbaum Cline, Carta Creatives

Photo by Kyle J. Caldwell and Stylist: Gina Ciotti

Don't be afraid of dark colors! Many assume that using a dark paint color in a small space will make the room feel smaller or be overwhelming. In fact, a bold color can provide the perfect backdrop to allow your furnishings, art, and accessories to really pop. This will create visual interest and can really warm up a small space that transitions wonderfully from season to season.”

– Kristen Mirabile, Kristen Mirabile Design

HABITAT
SHE DESIGNED A LIFE SHE LOVED
CREATIVE CO

Photo by MYR Consulting

"The biggest mistake I find my clients making when they're trying to furnish a small space is that they use it as a 'furniture graveyard.' Because it's so small, old pieces from rooms that were recently redone are repurposed. Just because the space is small, it doesn't mean it doesn't deserve the proper design. To fix it, I first point out how a better-fitting piece would make the small space so much more useful. That usually convinces them to dedicate some design time to the tiny room."
– Judith Heimowitz, 7B Design

Pretty Proportions

"Make a list of essentials for the space, as well as nice-to-have items with a level of priority. For example, in a powder room, it's essential to have a toilet and sink, but it would be nice to have some storage for extra toilet paper. In a bedroom, a bed and clothing storage are must-haves, followed by toy and book storage and a desk as nice-to-have additions. Utilize your walls. Take advantage of vertical space by hanging items on your walls. This adds depth and personality to the space without taking up valuable floor space."
– Malka Helft, Think Chic Interiors

Photo by Hulya Kolabas

"Small spaces need to be filled with appropriately scaled furniture. This makes the room balanced. I tend to add warm neutrals in the same tone/color family with different textures and materials. This creates a layered airy feel. The pièce de ré·sis·tance is one accent piece in black to add a little drama."
– Tami Wassong, Tami Wassong Interiors

Photo by Julie Leffell

“[One of my tricks] in designing a small space is to design window treatments that are taller and wider than the windows. In doing so, the window will feel larger and it will add a sense of greater height to the room.”
– Justine Wolman, Justine Wolman Interiors

“The most important thing to keep in mind is the size of the freight elevator. In homes, you have doors and sliding doors to get the furniture into the house more easily. In an apartment, everything must be measured to the size of the freight elevator. The sofa in this apartment had to be upholstered onsite because it would not fit in the freight elevator.”
– Claire Paquin, Clean Design Partners

Photo by Regan Wood

“Often a small space won’t fit your standard pieces without looking forced. Embracing a custom piece of furniture or built-ins can be an investment, but in the long run, you will be happy you

worked with the parameters of the space, instead of retail items looking too big or too small. It's [also] important to determine how you are going to utilize the space, and design it to be in sync with the rest of your home. It should flow and look purposeful.
– Tobi Schmidt, Tobi Schmidt Designs

Photo by Jane Beiles

"We've seen that when it comes to small spaces, it is critical to keep proportions in mind. Don't let your eyes be bigger than your belly... or, in this case, your space. Pick items that are proportionate and complementary to the space you have. Really take into consideration how tall, wide, and long an item is. For instance, for this small bedroom project, we needed to accommodate a reading nook. We specifically chose an accent chair with a shorter height, with thin legs that matched the color of the walls. These design choices made it so that the item took up as little visual space as possible."
– Anandy Germosen Ramos and Lorien Pereyra, Design Alcove

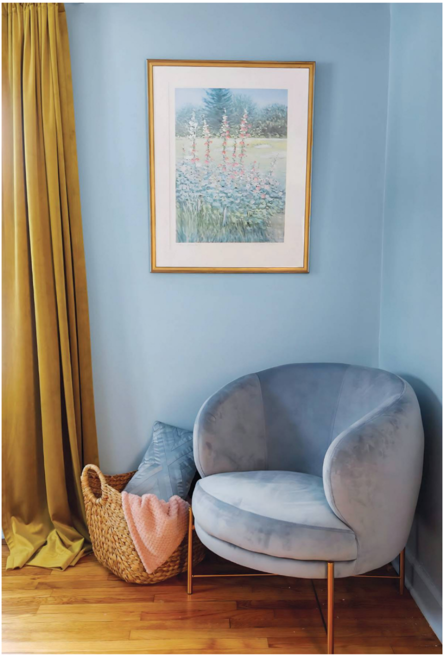

Photo by Lorien Pereyra