

## Home Life Style

# Big Design for Small Spaces

Alexandria-based interior designers share their suggestions for making diminutive spaces sing.

By MARILYN CAMPBELL  
GAZETTE

**L**ighting is important in any space, but is vital to a small space. “You don’t want [small homes] to feel cramped or tight,” said Laura Campbell of Peabody Architecture. “We alleviate that with lots of natural light.”

Elizabeth Todd saw the significance of lighting when she purchased a two story building in Old Town. She turned the top level into an apartment that she rents to her sister. Her biggest issue with the space was that it had only two windows.

“The first thing that I thought of when I got up there was ‘how do you make this place lighter?’ And that was the thing that we struggled with the most,” said Todd, who houses her store The Shoe Hive in the building’s bottom level.

Todd hired Alex Deringer and Courtney Cox of 2 Ivy Lane Interiors. The design duo added recessed lights and skylights to give the space an airy feel.

“Whether it is achieved through table lamps, floor lamps, recessed lighting or chandeliers, a proper lighting plan adds to



PHOTOS BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

**Designers David Peabody and Sarah Pak use built in shelves in Ann McCord’s Alexandria condominium to create a feeding space for her dog Tonka.**

the ambience and mood that is set in a room,” said Deringer.

Another issue that Todd had with the apartment was the layout. “It was very chopped up and there was no flow,” she said.

The designers used color to create a sense of continuity.

“Using a common color though out threads throughout brings fluidity to the space,” said Deringer. “A common thread of color also adds a casual elegance. It is a unifier.”

That doesn’t mean that everything has to be beige. Vibrant colors can work in small spaces too. “Think of [furniture] as a little black dress,” said Deringer. “You can start with neutrals and always accessorize it with color through pillows or other accessories. Artwork can also be bold.”

Textures and patterns work in small spaces when used in moderation.

“To avoid a cluttered look in a small space, you don’t want a variety of patterns and colors that are fighting with each other,” said Deringer. Color adds depth to a space, but three or four patterns is enough.

### SMALL KITCHENS

Just because a kitchen is small on space doesn’t mean that it can’t be big on style and efficiency. Just ask Ann McCord. After living in her Alexandria condominium for almost 20 years, McCord decided to

**“By thinking through how a person really lives and designing creatively, you can make a small space seem bigger because everything has its place.”**

— Designer Sarah Pak

purchase the adjoining unit and create one larger living space with a little more than 1,500 square feet. She enlisted the help of David Peabody of Peabody Architects and Interior designer Sarah Pak of SPI Design.

One of McCord’s top priorities was a kitchen that was open to the living and dining rooms. Pak suggested using integrated appliances that are covered with wood panels that match the wood of the custom cabinets.

“In this case, it was important to invest the money in an integrated refrigerator,” said Pak. “They are expensive, but in this space it is really important that this refrigerator not look like a refrigerator. Otherwise you’re sitting at the dining room table looking at [an appliance].”

The design team added built-in bookcases that face the living room, but serve double-duty as a kitchen counter that camouflages



**Designer Alex Deringer keeps the colors in a small kitchen neutral and uses unexpected lighting to add elegance and glamour, as seen in this Alexandria kitchen.**

the sink. “If you are in the living room, you aren’t necessarily aware of the fact that there are dishes in the sink because the cabinet is high enough to hide it,” said McCord.

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**Designers David Peabody and Sarah Pak use built in shelves on the stairway wall in Ann McCord’s Alexandria condominium to create a wine rack. The designers stress the importance of using all available space in small homes.**

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“We [make use of] every possible inch in a small kitchen by using shallow cabinets,” said Pak. “The type of cabinet you select in a small kitchen is very important, since storage is so often the biggest challenge. Frameless cabinets allow the most storage space.”

Another key to maximizing space is the use of small-scale appliances. “Most manufacturers have smaller depth, smaller width appliances that can fit into smaller spaces,” said Deringer. “There are dishwasher drawers [that fit easily into small spaces] as long as the amount of stuff you have to clean isn’t big.”

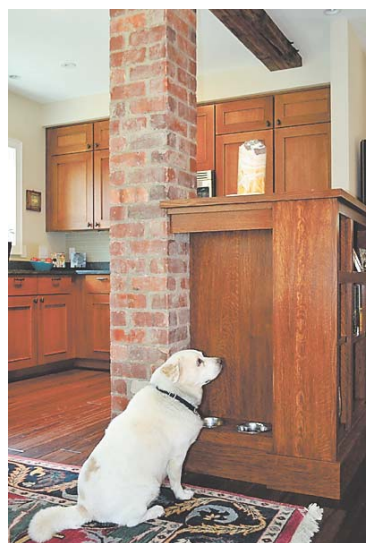
## STORAGE, EVEN FOR PETS

A dearth of storage space is a quandary many people face, no matter the size of their living space. Peabody and Pak added extra storage space to McCord’s condominium by using empty wall space to build shelving.

“We always try to use every bit of available space,” said Campbell. “We add more built-ins or creative ways to use what space there is.”

On the wall under the stairway that leads to the second floor, the design team built in a wine rack, book shelving and a cat bed. A similar pet space was added to the bottom of a half-wall that surrounds her kitchen. There are built-in spaces for pet food bowls and another space for a dog bed.

“[This keeps you from] having a big dog bed in the middle of the living room,” said Pak. “By thinking through how a person really lives and designing creatively, you can make a small space seem bigger because everything has its place.”



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**There are two nomination categories:**

(1) Those who have contributed at least one tangible improvement to the quality of the city’s life that would likely be missing without this person’s vision and energy.

(2) Those demonstrating exemplary service to the city over ten years or more, especially service on Boards, Commissions, Committees or Service Organizations that improve the quality of life in Alexandria.

Nominees must live or work in Alexandria. Those currently running for or holding political office are not eligible for consideration. The contributions of City employees must be beyond the responsibilities of their jobs.

See [www.AlexandriaLegends.com](http://www.AlexandriaLegends.com) or call 703-625-2330 for a nomination form. Send your nominations no later than November 15th to [AlexandriaLegends@NinaTisara.com](mailto:AlexandriaLegends@NinaTisara.com) (e-mail preferred) or Living Legends, P.O. Box 10485, Alexandria, VA 22310.

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