

CUSTOM BUILDER™

All in the Family Room

Wendy A. Jordan -- 7/1/2003

Family rooms are not just for families anymore. They are for hosting parties, entertaining a few friends or simply relaxing alone. In other words, they are "everything rooms" - and every home needs one.



Wendy A. Jordan's
Editorial Archives

This family room was added to a Reading, Mass., Cape Cod after the four children were grown and gone. The homeowner says, "We always wanted one big room" equally suited for guests to gather or her husband to sit and read the newspaper. Architect Joseph Luna, AIA, of Luna Design Group in Lynnfield, Mass., designed the space to work for both ends of that user spectrum. And because the grown children now have children of their own, the room becomes an "extended family" room when they visit.

Luna says empty nesters - among others - come to him regularly for similar additions. After raising a family in a house, they have an emotional attachment to the home. Once they weigh their choices - buy a condominium with no family history or spend the money on a room addition - they choose the solution that enables them to keep the family home but make it more functional.



Before adding this family room, the living space was cramped and compartmentalized. The homeowners hosted guests in the formal living room and relaxed in a small den. They wanted a versatile new room "with lots of light and lots of windows," the wife says. Ideally, the new room would be attractive but childproof and would capitalize on its connection to the large back yard. The room Luna designed provides all that and more to score a perfect 10. "We really do enjoy it," the wife says.

Incorporating the old den, the room stretches another 20 feet into the yard. Although the wife was concerned that the long space might "look like a bowling alley," there was no need to worry; Luna used several devices to shape and segment the area. A loft ceiling tops the new section, but the den ceiling remains low, creating a semi-separate, sheltered space for watching television. Luna added a few feet to the den and the bedroom above it and used the new bedroom wall to frame the area, which has a cathedral ceiling. Built-in cabinets and commanding, paired columns create a portal opening between the two ends of the family room, dividing and linking them at the same time. The two spaces can be used separately, but "if we have people over, we can merge the two areas," says the wife. Continuous wood flooring unites the space, as does the crisp, white trim and pale gray wall color.

Light, loft, strong lines and lack of clutter make the family room dramatic. "Guests are taken aback when they walk in," says the wife. The trim matches that in the existing house. So do most of the divided-lite windows. Luna specified extra-high glazing in the bay and a square clerestory for a bright touch. He used single lites in the bottom half of the double-hung windows to provide clear views and add a subtle, contemporary spark. Though open, the room accommodates activity zones, including the corner table for lunch or letter writing and the sofa and chairs for get-togethers.

As for light and views, the wife couldn't be happier. "The room is almost all windows," she says. With skylights and a square window above, double-hung windows on three sides and a bay window wrapped in tall windows, the addition is filled with natural light as well as style. "We go to that area of the room all the

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time because of the light and brightness," the wife says. "We use the living room less and less." French doors expand entertainment possibilities by connecting the room to a covered deck and terrace.

Luna spaced wall sconces around the room for balanced lighting. The sconces and the fixture hanging in the window bay operate on dimmers so the light can be softened for entertaining. Ceiling speakers connect the family room to the living room's sound system. "That is a beautiful feature," says the wife. "It makes this a very peaceful room."

The homeowner says she didn't want clutter in the room. Storage areas in the cabinets behind the columns and in the window seat keep things hidden and are almost hidden themselves. The framed picture near the French doors covers a hinged panel that hides the "electronic clutter" of switches and keypads for the sound system, ceiling fans, operable skylights and motorized skylight shades.

The exterior of the addition blends smoothly with the existing home while expressing its own identity. The roof gable ties into the main roof, repeating its pitch. The pattern of window lites takes it cue from the other windows in the house. And the siding and the siding color and style match the house



The addition blends with the existing house, using the same siding and complementary roof pitches. White accents the trim and columns outside, just as it does inside the room. Offsetting the bay white and the triangle above it with white highlights this end of the addition while reducing the sense of volume.

perfectly. The columns framing the deck echo the theme of double columns introduced inside the addition. To accent the bay window and reduce its scale, it is painted white and trimmed with bead board. The bay becomes "a little jewel box," Luna says.

Like the owners of this family room, remodeling clients around the country want family rooms that have it all.



Hardwood flooring flows seamlessly between the two sections of the room; the wide portal graciously separates them. Mirroring the clerestory is an interior window at the bedroom wall; it encloses a backlit shadow box. The double French doors provide a wide passage to the deck.