

MOVING ON UP!

Remodelers Relocating Laundry Rooms for More Convenient Access

Whether you are a singleton or a family of five, it's no fun to be running down to the basement to wash, dry, fold, and return the laundry to bedrooms and closets. It's a common request for remodelers from the Milwaukee/NARI Home Improvement Council Inc., to redesign space to accommodate the washer and dryer in the mud room, back entryway, and even on the second floor to be closer to the bedrooms.

"It's easy to do, especially in newer homes," said Tony Rink, CR, Renovators Ltd. "We had a client in New Berlin who wanted to renovate their basement, and while doing that, move the laundry upstairs. We were able to create space by reducing the depth of a closet that was in the mudroom. It was directly above where it was located in the basement, so plumbing was not a major challenge."

"A first floor laundry room gives easy access from the living area to change and monitor loads, and helps keep the noise away from the bedrooms. But having the laundry room on the second floor keeps it within close proximity of the source and storage of the majority of laundry (bedrooms and bathrooms)," said Jim Pitzen, ALA, CR, Pitzen Design, Ltd.

Homeowners Eric and Joanne Eisenhart were well-acquainted with the convenience of a main floor laundry in their previous home. But when they relocated to a century-old home on Milwaukee's East side a year ago, they were prepared to undertake a bigger renovation project and an easy-to-access laundry room was a must-have. They opted to have the laundry room on the second floor.

"The laundry was originally in the basement and we didn't like hauling the clothes back and forth." We have found great convenience in moving the laundry to the second floor," said Eric Eisenhart.

In keeping with the character of an older home, even one that is being updated, placement of the washer and dryer needs to be thought out. With the Eisenhart home, the main floor wasn't an

option and a landing on the second floor had enough space, but was designed for more formal use.

"There are always options like stackable washer/dryer units, which can be located in closets, allocating some space out of a large bedroom or hall way or completely taking over a small spare bedroom, said Alan Freysinger, architect and co-owner of Design Group III, and the Eisenhart's remodeling contractor. "In this project, we took over some closet space from another bedroom (reducing this bedrooms closet down in size) and took some space out of the existing master bathroom (minimal amount) as we reworked the second floor to create this laundry room/laundry closet," Freysinger said.

It also dovetailed nicely with a bathroom renovation the Eisenharts were planning with Freysinger.

PROXIMITY TO PLUMBING

"Having the plumbing close or adjacent to the laundry room certainly made the plumbing work more efficient, which usually translates to less costly," Freysinger said. "Water lines are easier to deal with these days because they can be done with flexible plastic tubing, making the routing of the pipes much simpler if you don't have walls and floors opened up. These new plastic water pipes have been shown to be very safe from a chemical leaching standpoint as well. So they are

often used for sinks or places where the water will be consumed."

However, with the laundry proximate to finished areas, possible overflow issues need to be addressed. Freysinger installed a plumbed washing machine pan, which is similar to a shower base. "We had a waste line connected to this pan/basin that the machine sits in; that way if the machine would leak, the water would go down the drain," he said. "This pan also has a removable curb at the front to make movement of the washer easier if needed. We also used braided water hoses what are much more durable and much less likely to rupture or break. The washer box that the machine water lines connect to has a water shutoff valve, allowing the owners to turn the water off should they be gone for an extended period of time."

With their renovations completed, the Eisenharts are pleased with their decision to bring their laundry closer to the bedroom.

"It really makes sense because the bedroom area is where the clothes, sheets and towels are," Eisenhart said. "It's great not having to haul the laundry around and it's easy to know when the cycle is done because you tend to be in or around the first or second floor so you can hear the chime on the washer or dryer go off."

"This is the first time we have the washer and dryer on the second floor and I must say I like it on the second floor even more than the first floor." □

DIY Tip:

If you're a do-it-yourselfer and replacing a dryer vent or hose, Freysinger advised against installing a vinyl accordion type: "They collect lint and can become a fire hazard. Most communities have code requirements that prevent this type of vent from being used. And if the dryer vent pipe is running in the attic make sure it is insulated and does not have a belly in it to allow condensation to pool up in the vent. All dryer vent piping should be cleaned periodically as well," he said. "Venting to the outside wall is critical as you do not want to have warm, moist air venting to your living space or attic.