



Granny Flat Design Principles

101



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Great design shouldn't just look good, it should be functional, useful, and fulfill purpose. Great design often seems astonishingly simple and it can improve the quality of your life. Here are some design principles to keep in mind when creating the plans for your granny flat.

Design Tip #1: Windows & Natural Light

Natural light has a huge impact on our mood. Adding windows that bring in sunlight will make your space feel happier and airier.

Maximize great views and minimize bad views. Think about strategically placing windows so that you can see the canopy of trees or an interesting urban scenery and minimize your neighbor's trash cans. Or the junky house next door.

Skylights, transoms and clerestory windows are your friends. These windows are higher up on the wall (or ceiling), so they let in light and maintain privacy. Let's say you built a granny flat on an alley. You don't want people to be able to look in, so you install clerestory windows on the wall facing the alley.





Bring in natural light from at least two directions. Keep in mind that the side where the sun sets will create hotter and harsher light meaning higher energy bills to keep you cool.

Hang Mirrors. If adding a window is not an option, try hanging mirrors in strategic places to reflect whatever natural light you have.



Design Tip #2: Ceiling Height

Most granny flat building code allows you to build up to 15 feet without impacting your square footage. Take full advantage of this by maximizing the height of your ceiling. It will make your space feel bigger and more spacious. If vaulting your ceiling is an option, explore that.

Another ceiling trick is to leave your beams exposed. This will bring another 9-12 inches of height to your ceiling and coffered beams add a nice architectural touch to a space.

Design Tip #3: Pocket & Accordion Doors

Pocket Doors save a lot of space, especially in the bathroom, and are totally functional. Include your electrician in the planning process, because pocket doors can consume space needed for plumbing lines or electrical. Accordion Doors unlike pocket doors, fold up within a space, instead of into the wall. Like pocket doors they can save space and make great room dividers.





Design Tip #4: Outdoor Space

Where weather is pleasant year-round, a patio can serve as a second living room. Think about building a deck or outdoor patio within access to your granny flat. Explore using French, sliding glass or accordion doors that let in a lot of light and connect you to the outdoor space.

Design Tip #5: Create Long Views

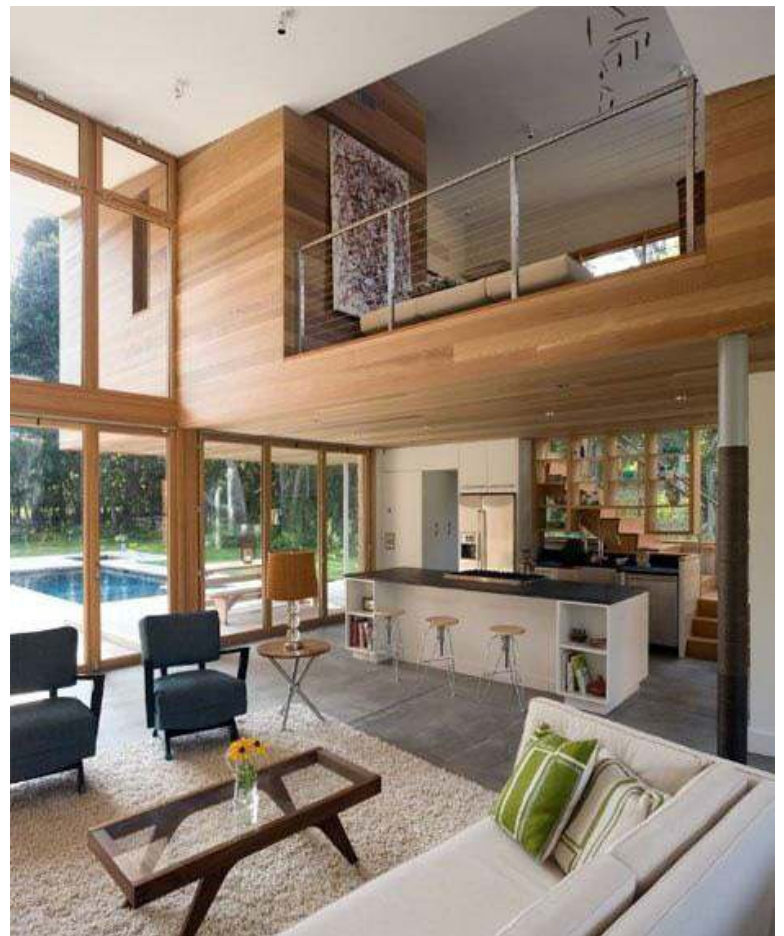
Creating long site views allows the eyes to roam giving the appearance of spaciousness even in smaller spaces. When designing your granny flat try to avoid doors or stairwell walls which block views. Especially in a small space try and minimize furniture and clutter. A good rule of thumb is to use the two-foot rule. Establish passageways of at least 24 inches between furnishings.





Design Tip #6: Great Rooms

When designing small consider adding a great room, a large central multi-purpose room. This maximizes an open floor plan and connects the kitchen, living room and dining room. Great rooms typically have tall ceilings. Consider a floating furniture plan, which positions furniture away from the walls and centered around a focal point, like a fireplace. Large area rugs can also bring a lot of warmth and personality to a space.





Design Tip #7: Think Storage

Before you under take the building of a granny flat think about the things you own. Are there things you can purge? Junk accumulates slowly, which has a big impact on our mood. Gather up all the clothes you haven't worn in the last couple months and donate to a Good Will.





Make sure to utilize all available storage. For example, below stair cases can make for an incognito closet. Think about storing things like cleaning supplies, bikes and vacuum cleaners.



Design Tip #8: Multi-Functional Space

Just like the great room which blends functional space, think about how you can overlap the utility of a room. Using a murphy bed can turn a bedroom into an office space, or a room for the kids to play. Putting a table outside turns a patio into a dining room on pleasant nights.



A Murphy bed makes transitioning from bedroom to office easy.





Design Principal #9 Find the Right Hue

Colors have an emotional impact on us. Think about your best memories. What colors do you see? Are there colors you associate with positive feelings? Explore what colors you already have in the space around you.

You can give the illusion that the space is bigger than it is with color. For optimum effect, select soft off-white tones, which make a space feel bigger. Then paint your wall trim and moldings in a lighter color than your walls.

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