

3 factors to consider before converting an attic

(METRO) – At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many homeowners suddenly found themselves in need of more usable square footage in their homes. Required to work from home due to social distancing recommendations, millions of working professionals suddenly found themselves setting up shop at kitchen tables or islands, in alcoves, garages, or even walk-in closets. Those makeshift offices were never supposed to be permanent, but as companies loosen workplace policies and embrace full remote or hybrid working arrangements, professionals are seeking more permanent home office solutions.

Home additions are a possibility for homeowners who need more usable square footage, but additions may not be the right option for everyone. If adding on won't work, homeowners may want to look up ... at their attics.

Attics with ample space can make for ideal home offices, as they're away from the hustle and bustle of a home's main floor. That can make it easier to concentrate when everyone is in the house and reduce

the likelihood that video calls with colleagues and clients will be interrupted by kids and pets.

Attic conversions are not always possible, and the following are three important factors homeowners may need to consider before they can go forward with such projects.

1. Dimensions – Both the renovation experts at This Old House and the real estate experts at UpNest indicate that at least half of a finished attic must be a minimum of seven feet high and seven feet wide and 70 square feet. Requirements may differ depending on where homeowners live, but that 7-7-70 guideline is generally the minimum requirement. An attic that fails to meet such requirements won't necessarily be a lost cause, but it might be costly to make adjustments that ultimately align with local codes.

2. Access – Access is another aspect that must adhere to local safety guidelines. Many attics are accessible only through pulldown ladders, but that will have to change if homeowners repurpose their attic spaces. A stair-

case that complies with local laws will need to be installed, and contractors can work with homeowners to build that and estimate the cost. Homeowners who simply want to put desks in their attics without going with full-fledged conversions are urged to adhere to local access requirements anyway, as they're intended to ensure residents can safely escape attics in the case of a fire or another emergency.

3. Climate control – Attics are converted to provide residents with more livable space. Converted space is only livable if the climate within the attic can be controlled so it's cool in the summer and warm in the winter. An existing HVAC unit needs to efficiently heat and cool an extra room. If it can't, bills might spike because the rest of the home likely won't be as comfortable, forcing homeowners to adjust thermostats to offset that discomfort. That also could affect the unit's life expectancy. Before going forward with an attic renovation, homeowners should contact HVAC professionals to determine if attic spaces can be serviced

with the existing units and ductwork, or if an alternative arrangement must be worked out to make the spaces livable.

Attic conversions can be great ways to make existing spaces more livable. Homeowners considering such projects should

pay attention to three important variables as they try to determine if attic conversions will work for them.

Different types of home insulation and where to install them

(METRO) – When thinking about renovating their homes, homeowners may imagine changing wall colors, expanding room sizes or upgrading appliances and fixtures.

However, unless people take inventory of the less glamorous components of the home, such as structure, plumbing, heating and cooling, and insulation, other improvements may be for naught.

A home insulation project certainly doesn't offer the wow factor of a kitchen remodel, but insulation serves a vital function in the house that helps keep people comfortable and reduces energy consumption. Insulation is typically placed in areas where air escapes, such as between the stud cavities inside the walls and in the attic, and serves to slow and reduce heat transfer.

The U.S. Department of Energy says between 50 and 70% of the energy used in homes is for heating and cooling.

By improving home insulation, homeowners can make their homes more comfortable, consistent and efficient.

In fact, the ENERGY STAR program overseen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says homeowners stand to save an average of 15 percent on heating and cooling costs by adding proper insulation. To do so, homeowners can take a crash course in home insulation and find the products that fit their needs.

Blanket batts and rolls

Blanket batts and rolls typically are constructed with fiberglass, so proper safety gear, such as a mask and gloves, is needed when handling them. Installing this type of insulation is relatively easy since the materials are designed to fit the standard width between studs, rafters and floor joists.

Loose fill

Loose fill is usually made of fiberglass or cellulose (recycled paper fiber). It is blown or sprayed into place with pneumatic equipment, according to The Home Depot. Loose fill can be ideal for hard-to-reach areas in attics or inside wall cavities. It's good for adding insulation to irregularly shaped areas. Since it requires special equipment, this is a job best left to professionals.

Sprayed foam

Sprayed foam is just as

the name implies, a foam made from polyurethane, polyisocyanurate, cementitious, or other materials that are applied by a spray container.

DIYers who need only small applications can use canned products.

Large quantities are pressure-sprayed by professionals.

Foam board/rigid foam panels

Ideal for unfinished walls, such as basement or foundation walls, floors and ceilings, these are boards of polyurethane or polystyrene.

Foam boards tend to reduce energy consumption more effectively than other types of insulation.

Homeowners considering upgrading their insulation or amending existing insulation should do their homework on the type of

insulation that will be most effective for their homes.

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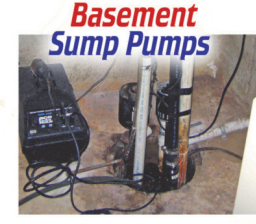
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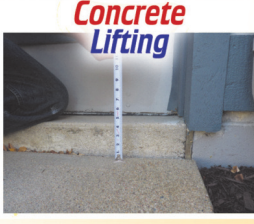
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