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TODAY'S HOMEOWNER

Remodeling May Be Required When Young Adults Live With Parents



Michele Lerner, Associate Editor

Some DIY remodeling may be needed for everyone's comfort and privacy when Millennials and Gen Zs live with their parents.

While there are plenty of young adults over 18 who choose to live with their parents because of the pleasure of their company or the cushy surroundings, many also stay home longer because moving out just costs too much.



Basement bathroom addition by Michael Winn - Photos by Stacy Zarin Goldberg

Approximately one-fifth of millennials live with family members today and 68% of Gen Zers over 18 live with family members, both of which are higher percentages than previous generations when they were their age, according to research by RentCafe, an apartment search website.

Not only are more young adults firmly planted in the family nest, more than 40% don't expect to leave within two years. Some plan to stay even longer: 14% of millennials and 6% of Gen Zers anticipate living with their family for a decade or longer.

Financial circumstances or health-related issues are the two main reasons that young adults are slower to leave home than previous generations, according to the research. Housing affordability dipped to its lowest level on record in 2023, with a homebuyer earning the median income needing to spend 41% of their gross earnings to buy the median-priced house, according to a report by Redfin. Rents, which were elevated by increases in 2021 and 2022, rose another 3.3% in November 2023 compared to November 2022, according to Zillow.

Remodeling for a Multigenerational Household

Unless the parents live in a palatial home, everyone probably wishes for a bit more privacy and separation now that you're all adults. For the homeowners, investing in a major remodel may not seem worthwhile when presumably the younger generation will move out in a few years. Flexibility is key.

"Before you start your remodel, think about what you might do with the space after your children move out," says Mallory Micetich, a home expert at [Angi](#), a home improvement platform. "Maybe you will use the space to care for aging parents or maybe you will rent it out instead. Thinking about the long-term use of the space can help you make smarter decisions about your remodel."

Even if you don't plan to sell your home in the next few years, it's important to consider whether you're adding value to your property or making it less appealing to future potential buyers.

"The key here is to create versatile spaces," says Michael Winn, owner of [Winn Design + Build](#) in Falls Church, Va. "For instance, converting a basement or spare room into a self-contained suite with a small kitchenette and bathroom can be ideal for a Gen Z adult. Once they move out, this space can easily transform into a guest suite, a home office or even a recreational area. The inclusion of modular furniture and convertible elements (like Murphy beds or foldable desks) can enhance the adaptability of these spaces."

Whether people are accommodating a multigenerational family or simply want to expand their space, data from [Houzz](#), a home improvement platform, shows that searches for “ADU [Accessory Dwelling Unit] garage conversion” soared by 2,286% when comparing the first quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of 2023. Similarly, “ADU over garage” searches were up 206%, “basement family room” searches were up 791% and “basement kitchenette” searches were up 52%.

Comparing Renovation Costs

Sometimes when multigenerational family members choose to live together, they mutually finance a major renovation.

“Having separate spaces can make a multigenerational home more comfortable and enjoyable for everyone in the home,” Micetich says. “Depending on the layout of your home, building a finished basement, attic or ADU could be the most effective way to add some extra space and separation to your home.”

But when the younger generation lives with their parents to save money, they’re less likely to have the cash to pitch in for a significant upgrade to the house. That means the older generation needs to carefully consider the wisest use of their funds, particularly if this is to adapt to a short-term situation of a few years.

Remodeling costs vary significantly based on the scope of work and the existing structure of the house, Winn points out.

“Generally, transforming a basement might be more cost-effective compared to an attic or adding an ADU, primarily due to existing foundations and the potential for natural segregation of space,” Winn says. “Basements often already have necessary utilities, which reduces costs. Attics might require more structural and insulation work, hence could be pricier. ADUs, while offering the most privacy, are usually the most expensive due to the need for separate utilities and possible zoning or permitting challenges.”

REMODELING PROJECT	AVERAGE COST
Finish Basement	\$18,400
Convert Basement to Separate Apartment	\$61,000
Finish Attic	\$10,500
Convert Attic to Primary Bedroom Suite	\$27,000-\$80,000
Convert Garage Into Living Space	\$15,900
Add ADU (Private Entrance, Bathroom and Full Kitchen)	\$82,500

Source: Angi

DIY Renovations

Whether the younger generation pays rent to their parents, contributes to groceries and energy bills or lives with them for free, they can show appreciation for the accommodations with some DIY renovations.

“Painting, basic landscaping, installing simple fixtures or even upcycling furniture are great ways to contribute without needing advanced skills,” Winn says. “DIY smart home technology installation (like smart thermostats or lights) could also be an interesting and useful project for a Gen Z adult.”

For major remodeling projects, a contractor will be required but Micetich suggests saving money with a few easy DIY projects, such as painting walls and cabinets, removing old flooring and cleaning after the remodel is complete.

“If you’re building or remodeling an ADU, you can also DIY the garden or landscaping outside of the unit,” she says.

Green Improvements during a Remodel

A remodeling project is the perfect opportunity to make your home more sustainable, Micetich says.

“The demolition and remodeling process gives you easy access to add insulation to your home, which can help you save money on your energy bills over time,” Micetich says. “You can also make eco-friendly choices over the course of your remodel, like opting for energy efficient appliances and using renewable energy sources when possible.”

Winn recommends installing energy efficient windows in an addition and using sustainable materials to reduce long-term costs and environmental impact.

“You could also consider installing solar panels or a rainwater harvesting system as part of the remodel, which aligns well with the sustainability values often held by younger generations,” Winn says.

Numerous rebates and tax credits are available for making energy efficient improvements to a home, which can make these upgrades more affordable.

Future Functionality

As with any remodeling project, it’s smart to think about the future, including aging in place, potential rental income, resale value and who may inherit the house.

“When done correctly, your remodeled spaces can help you even after your Gen Z children move out,” Micetich says. “Before you start your remodel, think about ways you can make the space work for you when it’s time to age in place. For example, nonslip flooring can go a long way to prevent falls, and handrails can make it easier to navigate steps.”

Wider doorways, walk-in showers and minimal stairs are also smart ways to design with aging in place in mind, Winn adds.

"For rental potential, ensure the space has independent access, sufficient privacy and meets all local rental regulations," Winn says. "This approach not only caters to the immediate need, but also adds long-term value to the property."

A major remodeling project can be stressful and costly, but it can also bring a multigenerational family together for the planning process and provide the privacy everyone needs to make it easier to get along.