

Breaking Down Walls

By JOE SZYNKOWSKI | Green Shoot Media

When it comes to living spaces, more Americans are thinking outside the box — literally.

Home remodeling companies are busy across the country knocking down interior walls in favor of more open concepts.

Homes built decades ago often featured walls between kitchens, living and family rooms. Older homes were built in this way to better control heating and cooling, or because lumber from that period might not have been capable of spanning larger distances.

Today's design experts recommend building with space in mind. This means leaving these rooms unboxed by pesky walls.

If you're looking for a quick remodeling job that could do wonders for your home's layout and overall value, a wall removal might be your best bet.

LOAD-BEARING WALL?

Of course, there are some things to know before you break out the sledgehammer.

Load-bearing walls support the weight of your roof, attic and second floor. While all exterior walls are load-bearing, only some interior walls are classified as such. That's



why it's important to check with a local contractor to ensure you're not planning on tearing down a load-bearing wall.

Here are some things to consider when trying to deter-

mine if a wall is load-bearing:

- Does the wall parallel the joists above? If so, it is likely not bearing loads.
- Is the wall built at a perpendicular angle to the joists above? It may or may not be

load-bearing.

Again, confirm with a local contractor before deciding to remove any wall in your home. This may require an up-front charge, but the fee will likely be worth your peace of mind.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR BEHIND YOUR WALLS

Anyone who has removed a wall before knows there is always the possibility of surprises waiting behind the dry-wall.

Some things you can find when demolishing your walls include electrical wires; pipes and utilities; and water damage.

Be prepared to work through any of these challenges when moving forward with your project. You may have to incur extra costs of hiring a plumber or electrician to handle loose wires or plumbing.

Set a realistic budget to make sure you can cover extra costs that may come up. Your contractor should be able to walk you through any extra expenses as the project advances.

SAFETY FIRST

If you decide to remove your walls yourself, keep the following safety tips in mind for a successful project:

- Always turn off all electrical before removing or redirecting any wires;
- Remember to wear protective equipment such as glasses, gloves and long-sleeve shirts; and
- Place a tarp or plastic covering over any door openings as you remove drywall. This will keep the dust contained to one space.



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REAL ESTATE 101



Open Floor Plan: A Matter of Preference

There are pros and cons to an open floor plan, according to the National Association of Realtors. Among the benefits, they list maximizing square footage, achieving a brighter aesthetic due to more natural light, flexibility of the space and allowing the home's occupants to spend more time together — say helping kids with homework at the dining table while cooking dinner. Among the drawbacks: less privacy, more noise and fewer places to hide messes. Read more at <https://tinyurl.com/ybml9or5>.

HOMEWISSE GLOSSARY

Index: economic indicator used to calculate interest-rate adjustments for adjustable-rate mortgages or other adjustable-rate loans. It can increase or decrease at any time.

SOURCE: Federal Reserve

AD SPACE