

Doing more with less room

Globally, the demand for urban living in cities has increased faster than the supply of urban spaces. Cape Town has not been exempt from this trend. With the sea and mountain placing a geographic limit on how far the city can sprawl, urban space has become a scarce commodity. The result is that urban dwellers have had to look at ways of doing more with less.



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Jacques van Embden, MD and co-founder of urban property development company Blok, says: “Urban living today is all about embracing minimalism – reducing non-essentials without sacrificing comfort or luxury. Some ways of doing so are through taking advantage of the dual functionality of spaces, employing effective and unobtrusive storage solutions, utilising multipurpose furniture, doing away with rooms that serve only a single role and making the most of communal spaces.”

He elaborates on these below:

One area, an array of uses

Multipurpose spaces that offer a homeowner more than one solution are imperative to urban living; people demand more from their space and the home needs to respond to this need. To maximise the amplitude of an urban home, transform its ‘third spaces’ – those areas that are otherwise passive – into functional features. For example, a passage or the gap underneath a staircase can be converted into a small office, reading nook or bar.

Smart storage

Whether it's knives hanging on a magnetic strip on a kitchen wall, drawers beneath beds or Lazy Susan-style shelving, keeping clutter cleverly cleared away can optimise the space available and enhance its usability.

Flexible furniture

From a couch that has a dinner table extension to upholstered chests that serve as both seating and storage, furniture designers are taking note of the needs of urban inhabitants and are creating products that enable myriad uses. What's more, instead of overprescribing a space by having large bulky furniture, opt for a few smaller modular pieces that can either be combined or separated. For example, rather than having one big coffee table, get two smaller ones which can be pushed together or used individually as required.

The open plan option

Internationally, urban homes have increasingly featured open plan design resulting in the trend of the 'great room' in and around which life is lived. When spaces are not defined by hard lines as well as by changes in materiality or texture and instead flow from one to the other, it gives the resident freedom to use the space however and for whatever they want.

Communal is key

The Blok philosophy, says van Embden, is that home shouldn't stop at the front door. Making use of shared spaces helps to reduce the requirement of one's own resources and at the same time foster a sense of community amongst city dwellers.

Urbanist, director at Future Cape Town and CEO of Future Cities, Rashid Fataar says: "Due to the limits of available land in well-located parts of the city, we need to reconfigure spaces and homes to be more compact but also to be used for more practical needs such as storing a bicycle, having friends for dinner and so forth. The abundance of public parks and spaces in Cape Town, as well as improving public transport, greatly reduces the opportunity cost of residing in smaller spaces."

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