

Fun ideas for making better use of your underused living space.

Over the past few years, many of us have had ample opportunity to take a fresh look at our homes and the belongings inside them. And, after taking Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle to heart – and parting with underused items – we’re left with an interesting question: what to do with all this new space?

Whatever you do, don’t let your space become “recluttered.” Why not reimagine it instead? This article brings together several options to help you transform your home. So, whether you’re reorganizing to make more functional space – or just looking for a fresh start – you’ll find some quick ideas that can make a lasting difference.



Read all about it.

Whether you're an avid reader – or someone who always makes “read more” a New Year’s resolution, creating a quiet, purposeful reading space in your home is an achievable goal, even in small spaces.



Creating your space:

Stock your bookshelf. [Used books](#) read just as well as new ones – at a fraction of the cost. Find your books at garage sales, [Little Libraries](#), used book stores, or [thrift stores](#).

Make it comfortable. If getting rid of unused furniture is part of your plan, consider reusing the couch or armchair by having it reupholstered. Needing to replace something? Great finds can be had at many reuse retailers throughout Hennepin County, search the Choose to Reuse website searching under “Buy” and “Furniture.”

Don’t forget lighting. Studies have shown that warm white or soft white lights can help reduce eye strain and improve sleep quality. For even softer light, diffuse it using a heavy shade. If you’re planning floor seating, a repurposed table lamp will work well.

Work. And stay.

Today, many of us have office space in our home. They get used during business hours but go dark once the workday's done. Nothing maximizes your space more than making it flexible enough to accommodate multiple types of use, and making your office a flexible guest bedroom is a great example.

Creating your space:

Beyond the bed. Because beds take up a lot of space in any room, it's best if you can tuck them away somewhere when you need to work. Daybeds, sleeper sofas, and foldouts all offer the convertibility you need. You can also use the space under a sofa or daybed as storage.

Small desk, big upside. Apart from the space taken up by large desks, they tend to feel cold and impersonal for guests. A [smaller desk](#) can seem more inviting, and also keep the room convertible. When guests are expected, just roll your workspace into a corner or another room.

Strike a balance. While your space needs to remain business-like and functional much of the time, small and easy-to-store touches can make all the difference for livability. Be ready to put out rugs, pillows, and throw blankets to make the space feel cozier.



Bring in some green.

Adding some lush greenery to your living space is more than a design consideration, it's something that can actually make you feel better. A [study](#) from the Journal of Physiological Anthropology found that plants in your home or office can make you feel calmer and more comfortable. So, how can you be more purposeful with your indoor gardening?



Creating your space:

Using tight spots. Going vertical is an ideal strategy for maximizing green space, even in cramped corners. The internet is full of often expensive vertical garden gadgets, but you don't need to break the bank. [Reuse a bookshelf](#) to easily fill a wall with plants, without sacrificing much floor space. Use inexpensive wall-mounted shelves and use no floor space at all.

Farm the sills. Once you've parted ways with the knickknacks many of us display on our kitchen windowsills, it's simple to set up small planters with cooking herbs, leafy greens, and other easy food options. Take your mini farm up a notch by adding [artificial lighting](#), allowing you wider crop options and a year-round growing season.

Explore the unexpected. There are lots of fun, unconventional places to place plants. Reuse an [old dresser](#) for an eye-grabbing indoor garden. Plant some ferns and succulents in its drawers and add other plants on top. An [old ladder](#) makes a great place to grow and display multiple house plants in limited space.

Dress down that formal dining room.

Does your home have a formal dining space? How often do you use it – about as often as you get out grandma’s fine china or polish silver? Formal dining rooms are high on many people’s list of underused home spaces. There are some great ideas for making better use of the space.

Creating your space:

Game on. Many formal dining rooms were designed to fit a large, centrally situated table – and the overhead lighting that goes with it. That’s awkward for some uses but perfect for a game room. Add a round table and some chairs for board games, puzzles, or poker nights. You can even [make your own](#) felt table topper.

Tune up. Formal dining rooms often have doors. For the sake of everyone’s ears – and sometimes their nerves – a music room with doors that close when people practice their instruments is ideal.

Wind down. Consider a meditation or yoga room, with furniture loosely arranged around an open space for a mat. Instead of a chandelier hanging down into the room’s center, consider [sourcing a reused](#) flush light fixture or recessed lighting. Don’t forget the dimmers.



More space, more opportunity.

One of the best parts about reorganizing your belongings and living spaces is that the impact is immediate. Even subtle changes can make a big difference in how your home functions – and feels. And the process can be continual, evolving your interior spaces along with your needs and interests.

Find even more design and project ideas.

You can always access more reuse, decluttering, and project ideas [on our website](#). Enjoy your new spaces.