A Fresh Spin on Laundry Design

The workhorse of the home, that doesn’t often get the attention it deserves. The laundry room is a great opportunity for designers to hit the hot button of their homeowner!

Laundry rooms should be pleasant & functional!
Functionality

Take design cues from the kitchen and apply them to the laundry room.

- Similar to the familiar work triangle of the kitchen, laundry appliances and sink placement in the laundry room layout are important.
- Don’t forget plenty of counter space for folding and other use such as a hobby or craft area.
- A waste basket is a must-have! Incorporate one if possible in the cabinetry run for ease of use with a handy pull out.
Homeowners realize that if they’re going to invest in a nice laundry room, they will need materials that will last.

- Quality cabinetry that won’t warp with humidity & moisture.
- Heat & water-resistant countertops.
- Sufficient light to illuminate countertop tasks and flooring.
The National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) recent consumer preference laundry room survey revealed that:

- 95% of new homeowners request a separate laundry room.
- Laundry location is best away from high traffic areas—consider locating near the largest source of dirty clothes.
- 61% of laundry rooms are being built on upper levels rather than first floors or basements.
- For homes with a main floor master suite with walk-in closet and perhaps an adjacent work out room or spa—consider locating the laundry in this area for convenience & efficiency.

Increasingly quiet appliances allow a myriad of location choices based on family dynamics.
Desired Features

The NAHB survey also shows that homeowners want an expanded, multi-functional work area in the laundry room. Desired features include:

- Laundry sink for hand washing, soaking, and other tasks.
- Drying rack for sweaters, etc.
- Hanging space for drip-dry items.
Desired Features

Choose baskets or color coded bins for sorting dirty clothes by wash type: whites, darks, hand wash etc.

Use the same system for sorting clean clothes by family member!

Great natural light and a fun wall color create a pleasant work space!
Desired Features

A built-in ironing board is a great addition to the laundry room, eliminating the need to set up and take down the board at the time of each use.
Multi-Functional Uses of the Laundry Room

Let the Laundry Multi-task! There are many activities that can work side by side in a generous space.

• Craft or hobby area
• Gift wrap station
• Sewing space
• Pet accommodations
• Additional cleaning supply storage

When planning a multi-purpose room, do remember there will be an increased amount of humidity and noise.
Built-in appliances add custom appeal to the laundry.

- Adding a valance below the upper units will allow for height variance when the units need to be replaced.
- Using tall end panels with increased depth will accommodate the depth of the appliance AND the dryer vent.
- Pull the wall cabinets above the laundry pair to the depth of the machines and panels. Block from behind to create the desired depth, if an increased depth modification isn’t available.
Laundry facilities on the upper end of the budget may have some requirements different from the norm.

Heated drying rack cabinet
- A great place to hang & gently dry damp items or lay sweaters flat to dry.

Jetted sink
- Wonderful for hand washing without having to physically do the agitating.

Steam Washers
- A number of front-loading washers have an optional steam cycle. The theory is that steam is better able to penetrate fabrics & loosen stains than water alone.

Commercial ironing machine
- For that fresh from the dry-cleaners finish, these machines put the crisp in the crease!
Select appliances before starting the design

Knowing the make and model of the laundry pair going into the space is KEY!

- Be sure to locate the equipment in the right spot—make note of the plumbing and dryer vent location, it will be costly to move.

- Check dimensions and plan clearances carefully! The physical size of today's laundry equipment can vary greatly, don't let it be an issue.

- If front loading models are chosen, make SURE to identify the door swing on both the Washer and Dryer! There isn’t an industry standard for door swing location, and correct placement is crucial to avoid problematic transfer of articles from one machine to the other.
Washers-Front Loading

Front load washers tend to be gentler on clothes, are more energy efficient than top loaders & offer the best overall performance. Clothing tumbles in and out of the water, making it possible to wash a full load without filling the tub completely. This saves water & leaves items more dry at the end of the cycle.

- Plan 48” of clearance in front of each appliance to provide room to walk around open doors.

- Storage pedestals, provided by the appliance manufacturer, are great for detergent and softener storage. The elevation provides easy waist height access for loading & unloading items. This option is great if you have enough room to provide additional counter space or an island for folding and basket storage within the room.

- Be cautious of window heights—you don’t want to see the back or elevated equipment through the window(s).
Washers-Top Loading

Items are submerged in a pool of water and "agitated" to remove soil and dirt. More water and energy are typically used with these models and articles will be wetter upon removal.

- If installing a cabinet or shelf above the unit, leave at least six inches of clearance beyond the top of the washing machine lid while it is in the open position.
Dryers

Vented Dryers

Plan placement to keep the vent hose as straight & short as possible.
- The improved airflow will provides a quicker drying time.
- Safety is increased by reducing the lint accumulation.

Vent through an outside wall!
- For aesthetic reasons, avoid venting through a wall on the front elevation of the home.
- Vents that run straight up to the roof through interior walls are easily clogged.

Ventless Dryers

- Tend to be expensive.
- Take longer to dry items.
- Make a MESS in the laundry room!
“Green” Washers & Dryers

Key Word: Energy-efficient

- Some new washer models use up to 50% less energy than standard versions, look for the Energy Star label.
- If you select a washer with an Energy Star label, you know you’re saving at least 37% less energy & are using half the amount of water of models without the label.

Unfortunately there are no Energy Star Dryers on the market today.

The energy use of a dryer is second only to a refrigerator.
To best conserve energy, avoid the highest heat setting.

Best “Green” option: dry your clothes the old fashioned way-- hang them on a line or rack!
Extra Installation Details to make life easier!

- Extra insulation in the walls & floor will reduce noise.
- A floor drain--In the event a washer hose breaks or the washer overflows.
- An automatic shut-off valve--It senses the electrical current draw from the washer & only opens the water supply when the machine is in use.

Your plumber & electrician will have specifications for the water & electrical lines to keep your laundry room up to code in your area.
Don’t be afraid of COLOR!

○ This is a room that most likely will not be frequented by guests. Homeowners can have fun with the décor, and express their the bolder side of their personality!

○ Recommend semi-gloss paint. It is easy to wipe down, and choosing a brand with low VOC content will eliminate much of the “fresh paint” odor.

○ For fun, install colorful recycled glass tiles as a backsplash or on an accent wall.
Floor Selection
Recommend a waterproof choice in case of spills or leaks. Feasible options include: Ceramic tile, linoleum, rubber or stained concrete.
Avoid: Wood or carpet

Lighting Selection
The laundry area must be sufficiently lit to see spots and stains, match the socks, fold clothing and tackle the ironing.
- Natural light is ideal, if possible, select a room with one or more windows or a skylight
- Non-glaring incandescent lighting is preferred. Besides overhead lighting, separate wall fixtures located near appliances & the work space are convenient as well as undercounter lighting.
Homeowners may have special requests, like planning for the placement of a television or radio in the space for entertainment while doing their chores.

Some will want a totally "dressed" room, complete with pretty window treatments and decorative accessories.

The Laundry space may even house a display of the residents' collection of themed items.
Design Ideas

Perhaps a little whimsy?!
Design Ideas

• “You can’t just do one thing anymore,” designer Peggy Fruin says. “Here, you can wrap a gift while you’re waiting for the wash to be done, or arrange some flowers and catch the latest news on CNN while ironing.”

• What’s up with 3 appliances!? Include a second dryer for those summer days when the beach towels can’t be dried fast enough!

• Looking for a monochromatic décor? Combine various shades of white for this crisp, multi-tasking laundry room.
Design Ideas

A Great Space Saver!

• A laundry workstation and storage area fit along one wall of this bathroom.

• A handy pull out shelf between the stacked unit affords folding space for items fresh from the dryer.

• Shelving holds laundry baskets for sorting.

• The closed cabinet above offers convenient towel storage.

• Supplies for both laundry and bath are stored in the baskets above.

• A match-stick shade lowers all the way to the floor, gracefully hiding the utility area when guests are expected.
Designer Helena Steele, whose background is in historic preservation, identified the goal of this project, was to create a modern laundry room that looked like it was original to this 1925 Mediterranean Revival house. Windows and mouldings were matched to those elsewhere in the home to avoid a newly remodeled look.

The small laundry is located next to a home theater. Because guests pass the laundry room on their way into the theater, the homeowners wanted it to be an attractive space that they could also use as a staging area for serving light refreshments. Before friends arrive, a curtain is drawn across the washer and dryer to visually transform the space into a butler’s pantry.
It’s all about Details.

Opposite the farmhouse sink, a tall cabinet hides a laundry chute.

Almost too pretty for hand-washing, the farmhouse sink introduces pattern to the room’s décor. Household hand tools – hammers, screwdrivers and such – are kept in the cabinet to the right of the sink.

Under the sink is one of the room’s most clever touches: storage for cat food and the litter pan. Feline-sized access is provided by splitting an arched opening at bottom of the doors.

Below the counter is a pull-out ironing board and storage for sewing supplies.
Home Laundry Planning Guide

**LOCATING THE LAUNDRY ROOM**

Utility Room
- Generally has the utilities in place
- Typically has convenient access from rest of the home

Master Bedroom Suite
- Considerable amount laundry generated in this space
- Not convenient for everyone in household

Main Hallway
- Convenient for most of household
- May lack access to utilities
- Noise may be a factor to consider

Kitchen
- Convenient for household use
- Most utilities easily available
- Good location for multi-tasking
- Lint and additional moisture should be considered

Main bathroom
- Near main area generating laundry, especially if in close proximity to kids rooms
- Good access to plumbing and electricity

Basement
- Common location in homes including a basement
- Utilities easily accessible
- Generally few space constraints
- Clothes chute is most desirable for convenience
- A long distance to take clothes to and from bedrooms especially if there is no chute
Home Laundry Planning Guide

QUESTIONS FOR LIFESTYLE CONSIDERATIONS

Where does your laundry accumulate?
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Workout/exercise area

When do you do the laundry?
- In the morning before going to work
- During the day
- After work/during dinner preparation
- Late evening/after children are in bed
- Weekends/holidays/days off

Who does the laundry?
- I do
- Spouse
- Children
- Domestic help
- Other household members

Peripheral activities that will take place in this area:
- Ironing
- Sewing/mending
- Plant care
- Hobbies
- Household repairs

FROM UTILITARIAN TO SHOWPLACE—DESIGN THE PERFECT SPACE!
A LAUNDRY LIST OF REQUIREMENTS

- Wall Cabinetry
- Base Cabinetry
- Tall Cabinetry
- Pull out Waste Basket (Standard sku’s or customized sizes and/or colors?)
- Folding Area
- Drip Dry Area
- Open Shelving
- Baskets/Bins/Hampers
- Hanging Area/Hanger Storage
- Pet Provisions
- Craft/Hobby Space
- Drop Zone
- Message Center
- Gift Wrap Station
- Other

WHAT CAN YOUR LAUNDRY DO FOR YOU?
Home Laundry Planning Guide

Are water, drain & vent access available?
- From basement area
- From kitchen
- From existing utility room
- From adjacent bathroom
- From piping leading to another floor

Is electrical access available?
- If so from what location?___________________
- For electric dryer, 220-volt line from service panel required
- For gas dryer, 110-volt connection from any existing electrical line required

Is a gas line available?
- If so, from what location?___________________
- Can the gas line be tapped into at any point where available?

Is a dryer vent outlet available?
- Outside through the floor?
- Through the roof?
- Through the side wall?
- Will sufficient clearance (12") exist above ground or away from any obstruction?
- Is the distance of the vent run within the limits specified by manufacturer?

Is the addition of adequate lighting possible?
- Overhead/general lighting?
- Task lighting (Sewing, hobbies…)
- Over-sink light?
- Under-cabinet lighting?
Can a wall be removed to provide more space in the laundry room?
- Does the wall have utilities in it?
- Is it a load bearing wall? Or can a beam be added?

Is there a space for a clothes chute?
- Room above from which it will access
- Where will the end point be?

Is there room between the wall studs for a built-in ironing board?
- Determine per manufacturer's instructions, the location, installation, and electrical requirements of a built-in board.

Electronic Equipment
- Television
- DVD Player
- Radio or Stereo System
- Intercom
- Alarm System

Other Extra Details to Note:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

LAUNDRY ROOM EXTRAS
Budget Considerations

Proximity of water, electric & gas supplies will affect the cost of the project

• Location of the space near the closest utility access will help in controlling the budget.

Cost saving is possible if room can be converted or remodeled without major construction.

• Keeping the original utility locations is always the least expensive road—but not always the most efficient for layout.

Consider long-term value--How will this improve the overall value of your home?

• Returns on investment will be impacted by the range of home prices in your neighborhood, the overall condition of your home, and sensible design choices.
• A high quality Laundry Room Remodeling project can return as much as 67% - 78% of its initial cost.
• Homeowners should keep a permanent record of the cost of improvements to track their investment.

DON’T BREAK THE BANK!
Resources

- About.com Laundry
- Kohler
- NAHB
- Herhome.com
- Handyamerican.com
- KBB
- Woman’s Day Special Publications