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COVER STORY

Bleak to chic laundry rooms

A survey revealed homeowners would be willing to spend more money for a house if it had an updated laundry room. See our tips from experts on hookups, appliance size and shape, and trends for what's become a multipurpose room. **G4**

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On Page G12, you'll find our weekly Private Quarters, which takes you on a tour of the home of J.T. and Lisa Rieves. To see more photos of the home, go to www.MyAJC.com.

Before



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After



Loving the laundry room



As part of a first-floor renovation of her Roswell home, Rhonda Ross wanted to put a fresh spin on her laundry area. Slightly enlarged, the updated laundry area combines architectural elements of the adjacent kitchen, including the same Shaker-style cabinetry with contemporary pulls and custom-colored, wide plank oak flooring. The backsplash, with its opaque, gray-green glass tiles, adds a classic touch.

By **Linda Jerkins** For the AJC

Adjacent to the kitchen, the stylish laundry space in Rhonda Ross' Roswell house looks like a butler's or serving pantry. Custom cabinetry was used to disguise the washer and dryer. Camouflaging appliances is a popular trend in today's new and remodeled homes. CONTRIBUTED BY INSIDESIGN

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Like some of the big and small appliances in her kitchen, Ross also wanted her washer and dryer hidden behind cabinet doors. The gray-green limestone countertop over the appliances provides an area to fold clothes. As an extension of the kitchen, the stylish and functional space looks like a butler's or serving pantry.

"The area offers more storage, more light (thanks to a French door in the back) and is easier to use," Ross said. "Using similar materials throughout helped unify the look."

Like Ross, today's homeowners want a laundry area that blends style and convenience and looks as nice as any other room. But they want it to be a planned space, where everything has a function and purpose, said Jenny Parker, a kitchen and bath designer at Dunwoody-based Insidesign.

"A great laundry room is becoming more important to homeowners and more popular in remodels," Parker said.

A 2013 survey of homebuyers' preferences by the National Association of Realtors backs up Parker. In the survey, 63 percent of buyers ages 35 to 54 who bought a home between 2010 and 2013 also said they would be willing to spend more (about \$1,590) for a home with a laundry room.

Some people want a dog-washing space in their laundry area, Parker said. Others want to incorporate a drop zone for book bags, coats and mail.

"Everyone's needs are a little different when designing an updated laundry space," Parker said. "The main consideration is how you want to use your space."

Ready to take your laundry area from bleak to chic? Consider these tips from Kohler, BHG.com and Parker of Insidesign.

WHAT TO CONSIDER Before you start

■ **Location.** Laundry areas used to be in the basement, garage or a forgotten corner. Now they are more often on the first floor near the back door and kitchen or upstairs near the bedrooms.

■ **Multipurpose room.** Laundry areas can be part of a shared space, such as a home office, sewing room or an indoor potting area.

■ **Hookups.** Make sure your



As functional as it is pretty, the laundry room in this Nashville farmhouse features Ann Sacks tiles on floors and walls. A Kohler utility sink with the Parq faucet echoes the classic style of the kitchen. The counter above the washer and dryer adds a solid surface for folding or sorting. CONTRIBUTED BY KOHLER



A sink in a laundry room is useful for any family or lifestyle. Besides laundry, a sink is handy for prepping plants and hand-washing. So is a shallow, in-floor sink, where you can rinse off muddy shoes, fill buckets and wash the dog. CONTRIBUTED BY KOHLER



As part of a first-floor remodel, Eric and Michelle Brown of Sandy Springs got a new Electrolux washer and dryer (in Mediterranean Blue), and added custom cabinets, a bench and coat closet — and still had space for a second refrigerator.

CONTRIBUTED BY ERIC AND MICHELLE BROWN

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washer and dryer duo has what it needs to function properly. Washers require drains and hot and cold water lines. Gas dryers need a gas supply line and venting to the outside. Electric dryers require 120-volt circuits.

■ **Appliance size and space.** Measure before you buy or build. Washers and dryers measure from 24 to 33 inches wide. For loading and unloading, allow 36 inches in front of a washer and 42 inches for a dryer. That way, you'll have room to walk around them without bumping into them. Measurements for front-loading models differ. If you need a small-space solution, install stacked units, which occupy less floor space.

Features and tasks

Arrange work surfaces, storage areas and appliances to make laundry tasks, such as sorting, washing, drying and folding, easier. Here are some tricked-out features to consider:

■ **Counters.** Install a counter or a free-standing table so you have a place to fold clothes. With front-loaders, install a counter on top of the machines to save space. Countertops made of laminate, stone, quartz-surfacing, or solid-surfacing make it easy to clean up spilled detergents or fabric softeners. Plus, their smooth surfaces prevent snags when folding delicate lingerie or blouses.

■ **Island.** If you have a large laundry room, add a center island. It can accommodate laundry tasks and provide a wrapping station or a kid's crafting zone.

■ **Sinks.** A sink near the washing machine is handy for hand-washing delicate items and treating stains. Since the laundry area is often located near a first-floor entryway that leads to the yard or garage, the sink works as a first-stop, hand-washing spot. Shallow, in-floor sinks offer a place to rinse feet or muddy shoes, wash the dog or spot-clean



The homeowners wanted an organized and visually pleasing laundry space in their Marietta home. The washer and dryer were tucked into the wall so the focus would be on the entire area, rather than the appliances. Also added: a hidden ironing board, laundry chute and hanging rod. CONTRIBUTED BY INSIDESIGN

large items, like throw rugs.

■ **Hang it.** Install sturdy clothing rods to hang items just out of the washer or dryer. A double-tier clothes rack on wheels or casters also would work. If you don't have room for a clothes rack, purchase a flip-down wall-mount clothing valet.

■ **Press on.** Reserve a space for an ironing board: stand-up or pullout for touchups. A built-in ironing board saves space and makes the job seem less of a chore. Just flip out the board and plug in the iron.

■ **Storage.** Place your

laundry and clothing-care supplies in customized cabinets near the washer and dryer so that everything is handy when you need it. Store bleach and other dangerous compounds up high enough so young children can't reach them. Also consider installing a lock for added safety.

■ **Lighting.** Laundry areas don't often have windows, which can be a source of natural light. But even if they do, other lighting, such as recessed lights and under-cabinet lighting, is a work-area must. If it is a multipurpose

If you need a small-space solution, install stacked units, which occupy less floor space. Then use a variety of elfa components, including drawers and shelves, for storage and to organize your laundry essentials. Add a closet rod to provide a place to drip-dry clothes or to hang pressed garments.

CONTRIBUTED BY THE CONTAINER STORE



Your laundry area should include various types of lighting. For treating stains, go with task lighting, such as LED under-cabinet strips. Sun Tunnel skylights can bring in natural light, which is helpful for sorting and matching clothes.

CONTRIBUTED BY VELUX AMERICA

room, additional light sources should be in the design.

Trends

■ One machine that washes and dries.

■ Beyond white. Appliance colors in blue metallic, cranberry, sleek black and silver.

■ Second laundry room or laundry closet for larger homes and multigenerational families.

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

Today's homeowners want a laundry area that blends style, function and convenience. This cheery, birch and white elfa laundry closet is designed to fit a space at least 74 inches wide. Since the components are adjustable, you can design a space to suit your needs.