

Create an Open Floor Plan

If you're a fan of home improvement reality shows or follow renovation trends, you know that an open floor plan is a popular design that many homeowners want.

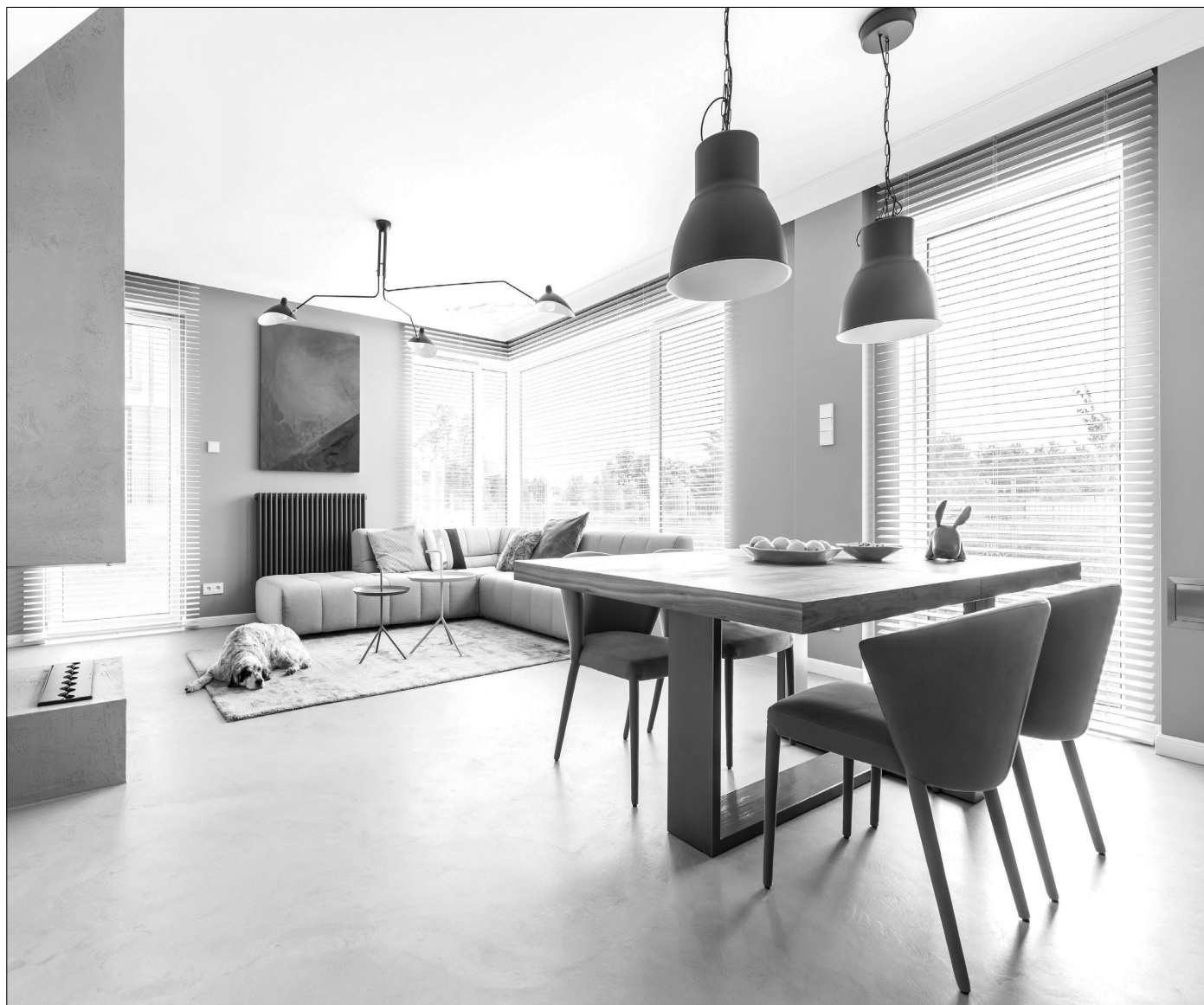
In fact, the National Association of Home Builders reports that 70% of recent buyers were interested in at least an open kitchen plan while 32% preferred a completely open arrangement.

Performing this renovation to an established home requires detailed knowledge about a home's structure. Since you will likely be taking down walls and rerouting electrical diagrams, an expert can ensure the integrity will not be affected.

BENEFITS OF BEING OPEN

There are multiple reasons that open floor plans are extremely popular.

One major advantage is the connection hosts feel with their guests while preparing party favors in the kitchen and engaging with their company in the living space. Family dinners and events with friends are more enjoyable when rooms flow into each other. Parents of young children also benefit from the ability to keep an eye on their little ones as



© ADOBE STOCK

they roam throughout the open space.

IDENTIFYING LOAD BEARING WALLS

Before removing walls to create your open floor plan, it's crucial to identify load-bearing walls. They are imperative to distributing weight forces of your property and typically

bear the load of a roof structure above. Most of the time, you can easily identify this important support by walls that run perpendicular to their joists. Since it may be difficult to tell without removing a wall's covering, getting advice from an expert is a beneficial resource before you find yourself with an expensive repair.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR NEW SPACE

The key to decorating an open floor plan is to make it appear symmetrical. You can start in the living room by arranging it around a focal point. The experts at Home and Garden Television recommend taking advantage of attractive centerpieces like a

fireplace or gallery wall.

Modern kitchens often utilize the sleek appearance of an island or peninsula rather than a traditional dinner table.

Organizing bar stools around their perimeter provides more space for guests without disrupting the flow of your open floor plan.

Fall Home Improvement Guide Cottage Grove Sentinel, September 25, 2019

6 - FALL HOME & GARDEN - COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL - SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

Improve your Driveway

Whether you're looking to redo your driveway to boost the appeal of your home's exterior or need it rerouted to accommodate new vehicles like a camper or trailer, you have several options to complete the job.



© ADOBE STOCK

From choosing the right material for your needs to hiring a team of experts, a driveway renovation can be a valuable project.

CHOOSING A CONTRACTOR

When researching and receiving different quotes from potential contractors, always ensure they are licensed to work and are insured. The job sometimes requires heavy equipment to finish successfully. If an accident happens, it's important your home insurance isn't liable. You should also find an expert who is proficient in the type of material you choose. Whether it's concrete, asphalt or even gravel, an installer's knowledge will play a large role in the outcome.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT MATERIAL

When planning a driveway renovation, there are numerous materials to choose from.

Make sure to consider your budget when deciding which to use as some installations can become costly. You'll also want to factor in maintenance as for some driveway options, it can be important to maintain its integrity.

Aggregate or gravel is one of the most affordable and low-maintenance options. It

is also extremely durable and easily repairable by adding more rock. Some downsides include the need for a drainage system, it's not as aesthetically pleasing, and snow removal can be difficult.

Asphalt can be a bit more strenuous on your budget but offers attractive curb appeal and high performance. It's

high maintenance and requires periodic sealant and a resurface every few years. This process can be relatively expensive in relation to aggregate maintenance so you should leave room in your budget if you choose this material.

If you're looking for low maintenance and an appeal-

ing aesthetic, concrete is a quality option, but it comes at an expensive price. While it is much more durable than asphalt, the initial install will be more costly. Consider if the front-load expense is more attractive than an affordable installation with higher maintenance costs down the road.