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For the AJC

Supersizing master showers

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Spacious master showers are replacing cramped spaces, offering more convenience and customization for one — or more — people to wash off the day's dirt and stress.

Some new homes are boasting bigger master suites with oversized showers, while some renovations are knocking out small rooms or closets to expand the bathroom.

"The more space there is in the shower, the more opportunity there is to work in additional components," said Rebeka Edwards, showroom manager for [Renaissance Tile & Bath](#), which has a showroom at Atlanta Decorative Arts Center. "You can really customize the shower for the people who are going to be using it."

Having more leg room and space for washing and shaving are obvious benefits of increasing the size of a shower. Bigger showers also can accommodate multiple homeowners, whether they are a couple or caregivers whose family members use walkers, wheelchairs or need assistance.

Individual experiences

A standard square shower typically is 36-by-36 inches, but Kelly Carlisle with [Design Galleria Kitchen and Bath Studio](#) is seeing sizes grow to 48-by-48 inches.

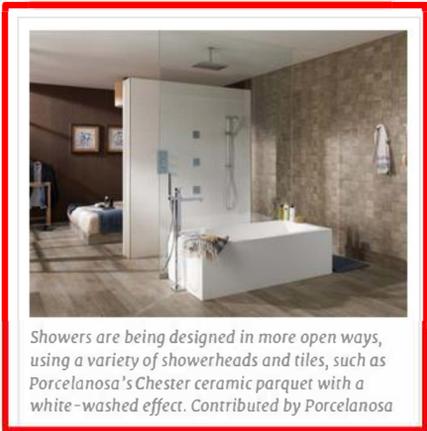
One recent shower project blew out the size to 70-by-70 inches.

"You can really customize it so that it becomes this sanctuary, or retreat," Edwards said.

Products are keeping up with high-tech demands. Homeowners can set their own water temperature and settings, and even customize lighting with chromatherapy mood lighting. Thermostatic systems by manufacturers such as Riobel allow shower heads to be set to run at different temperatures, sprays and pressures.



A shower with multiple sprays and a teak shower seat also has a more shallow threshold for easier access into the shower, especially for older homeowners. Contributed by JATI



Showers are being designed in more open ways, using a variety of showerheads and tiles, such as Porcelanosa's Chester ceramic parquet with a white-washed effect. Contributed by Porcelanosa

Carlisle said showers that will be used by two people at once can have dual showerheads, square or round rainhead showerheads extending from the ceiling, hand showers, benches and BodySpa systems with high or low pressure settings.



Bigger showers also mean the water temperature and water flow from showerheads and handshowers can be customized, using products such as collections by Kohler. Contributed by Kohler

Functionality and convenience

Bells and whistles won't be used if the space is not convenient or hospitable. If you have a steam unit in a shower and plan to spend time working out aches, a bench should be included to fully enjoy the space. If there's a beautiful tile mosaic wall but no niches big enough to hold products, that can make the shower experience frustrating.

Edwards encourages folks to think about what may seem to be minor details, such as where to place soap baskets and hooks for washcloths, that can make a big difference in functionality.

"Who wants this wonderful luxurious shower with a washcloth balled up in the corner?" she said.

The bathroom also is the perfect place for mold and mildew to grow. Those problems can stem from little or no exhaust, which remove moisture from the air, said Steve Morgan, managing director for [ServiceMaster Recovery Management](#) in Atlanta.

"If you take a long, hot shower and get out to find the walls appear to be damp, you need more exhaust," he said.

He suggests talking to an electrician about having bathroom exhaust wired directly into the light. If possible, leave the exhaust running for 15 minutes after you have left the room to make sure you have removed as much moist air as possible.

Doing more with the design

Although there are more modern and transitional homes in Atlanta, the city's traditional style still is seen with homeowners often requesting polished chrome and polished nickel finishes.

"It gives you a beautiful shiny reflective finish that makes all of those components in the shower almost look like jewelry," Edwards said.

Luxury plumbing collections also have more detail on the trim of the products, which means an industrial-looking body spray could better match a traditional home's design and architecture, she said.

A big shower can feature a stunning decorative tile pattern on a back wall or floor, Carlisle said. For example, a detailed and artistic tile mosaic can be added to the full back wall of the shower, from floor to ceiling. When using tile in an artistic way, the shower takes on a new role.

"When the showers are larger, it's more of a feature in the room, rather than being completely enclosed and off to the side," Edwards said. "We're looking into the shower in more of an architectural way than just a square rectangular box with fixtures hanging off it."