

The Trend Toward Smaller Homes Offers a Simpler Life of Luxury

Lee Ladyga September 29, 2014



Smaller Homes

Associated Designs of Eugene, Oregon is responding to a growing number of requests by new homebuilders for plans that offer an upscale lifestyle that lives large, but on a smaller footprint. Living in a smaller home has great appeal to many.

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For many people, owning a big home with a spacious back yard in a neighborhood of similarly sized dwellings is still the ultimate symbol of achieving the “American Dream”. However, more attention is being given to the small house movement which started in the 90’s and has continued to grow, including the launch of a TV show, *Tiny House Nation* . With most of the country still crawling out of the recession and billions lost in the real estate crash, the idea of living just as well in a smaller home has great appeal to some.

In 2013, the median size of a new home was about 2500 square feet, inching its way back up toward pre-recession sizes after several years of decline. Therefore, it’s still the exception rather than the rule for homeowners to build smaller than their neighbors. To help support the concept of smaller home sizes, city planners are opening up zoning laws to encourage urban density on smaller in-fill lots. And, the cost of land has skyrocketed in populated urban areas, making it a necessity to find savings in square footage.

Rick McAlexander of [Associated Designs](#) in Eugene, Oregon frequently gets requests to design a home that lives large in less footage. He sees the trend toward smaller homes gaining in popularity. He has clients around the country in recreational or resort communities building a second home with a smaller footprint, but wanting top-quality workmanship. In addition, Rick says he also works with retirees wanting a downsized, simpler lifestyle in their primary home.

“Some of my clients want an intentionally well-designed home, but now they have less need for big spaces. They put their money in the quality of construction materials and custom amenities rather than the square footage. The result allows them to feel like they are living large in a smaller home,” says Rick.

Young couples also see the beauty - and cost savings - of a smaller first home with quality features. If the home incorporates an energy efficient floor plan and attention is given to good construction, it can be a great investment to live in, as well as sell when the family grows out of the space.

Any type of homeowner will find that a smaller footprint can feel large when it’s properly designed. For example, [Associated Designs](#) has a popular plan at 1500 square feet, the [Glen Eden 50-017](#). This plan is an updated take on the Craftsman home, and is well suited for construction in both rural and suburban settings. It features eye-catching exterior design elements such as multiple gables, shake-textured siding, varied window styles, and stone entry columns which are capped by welcoming lights.

The house seems much more spacious than its 1500 square feet due to the richly glassed rooms and vaulted ceilings.

The oversized steps at the front of the home feel grand as they lead to a set of French double doors which open into a roomy, vaulted screened porch. From the porch, two more sets of double doors open into the vaulted great room. The great room and porch combination extends the indoor space into the outdoors by over 300 square feet.

Flames in the fireplace at the rear of the home's largest room serve as a warm, inviting focal point on chilly days and dark nights. Stacked shelves flank the fireplace. The room's vaulted apex runs down the center of the room, lining up perfectly with the center of the fireplace lending a sense of spaciousness to the main living area. Counters and custom built-ins wrap around three sides of the kitchen, while the space they surround is roomy enough for a large, country-sized table.

People who prefer a smaller home understand the best return on their square foot investment is not in the bedrooms, but in the larger living area and kitchen. The Glen Eden home has one full bath, tucked efficiently between two typically-sized bedrooms that both open into a private alcove where the utilities and closet are also located. A third bedroom or office is situated next to a half bath for convenience. This efficient bedroom and bath design offers ample privacy for everyone in a small footprint. Overall, the [Glen Eden 50-017](#) is designed to be livable, efficient, well-appointed and affordable.

The total budget for any new home is finally determined when choosing the type of flooring, countertops, cabinets, appliances, bath fixtures, ceiling fans, lighting and trim. Upgrade options for the external look of the home can include metal roofing for longevity and fire protection, durable cedar shingles, wood frame or casement windows, stone veneers and top quality outdoor lighting.

For a smaller home to work efficiently, owners take a serious look at built-ins and how they can conserve, making the best and most efficient use of available space. Bookcases and closet organizers are necessary for storage. Functional furniture can provide multiple uses, such as a large ottoman with underneath storage, instead of a coffee table. Or, a dining buffet at counter height for serving, with linens and china stored in cabinets below.

With the right floor plan, and attention to quality in construction and decor, a smaller house can offer an uncluttered and simpler life in a luxurious home.

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[Associated Designs](#) is located in Eugene, Oregon and designs custom house plans for developers, builders and homeowners. Plans are created by talented designers with more than 65 years of combined home design experience. Weekly columns featuring Associated Designs house plans are published in newspapers around the country. Since the company was founded in 1990, it has sold more than 60,000 home plans.

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