

All about Architecture

Smaller residences don't have to go without big-home features

According to the National Association of Home Builders, the American home grew from 1,400 to 2,330 square feet from 1970 to 2004. More than just space, buyers in many cases wanted more conveniences and a more visually impressive home.



Benjamin Schreier

Recently, however, a new market has emerged of buyers wanting smaller homes but with all the efficiencies and curbside appeal of their larger counterparts.

Today, architects are reworking many of their designs to meet the needs of these new clients,

hoping to prove that smaller homes can be functional as well as visually exciting.

One positive result of this smaller-but-efficient home trend: Buyers might find the building costs and the home's utilities are less expensive.

One problem, of course, is that architects must first find a way to successfully incorporate a client's growing wish list into a home with limited square footage.

For example, a South Florida home built in the 1920s is, on average, far smaller than the homes we have grown accustomed to in recent years. But the home provides lots of character, and almost every inch of space is used effectively.

Homes constructed during the building boom of the 1960s also provide space-saving ideas.

Some architects are using these early examples as they design homes of similar proportions to fit modern lifestyles. Here are some points to think about, and to talk over with your architect, when designing a home like this.

When you choose a floor plan, think about what is important to you and how you spend time in your home. A two-story foyer is a popular option and creates a dramatic sense of arrival, but you could also decide to use the square footage as additional living space.

Many people today spend little time in their formal living rooms, and many use their formal dining rooms only a few times a year. If you are one of these,



Photo by Brantley Photography

A smaller-home market has emerged. Nevertheless, owners want the same efficiencies and curbside appeal of their larger counterparts, such as what Affiniti Architects created for Verano in Port St. Lucie.

an alternative might be a great room that offers flexible space for day-to-day living as well as entertaining.

Because our lifestyles are increasingly hectic, a den or a home office has become almost a necessity. Consider a den that doubles as a guest room (think sleeper sofa) instead of having two separate rooms. This obviously depends on how many, and how often, guests stay the night.

Another option to save square footage is this: Instead of a den, design a desk to be built into another room, such as your kitchen or great room.

The number of bathrooms also increased as the homes grew. Though it's convenient for everyone to have his or her own bathroom, decide whether any of your family members can share one. Consider your individual lifestyle when making this decision. Perhaps you will decide that having larger bedrooms and fewer baths is a better use of space.

When considering the master suite, think about how much space you will need. If you will use the sitting area, include it; if you won't, save the space. Like the foyer, it might come down to the visual statement vs. the utility of the space.

With the master bath, many owners still opt to have grand spaces with whirlpool tubs, separate showers and separate water closets. If space is a concern, however, consider a larger, more luxurious shower, and perhaps just a partition to separate the commode from the sink area.

In secondary bedrooms, strip closets can be a more effective use of space



Photo by Jonathan Kolbe

Some architects are using early-20th-century residences as examples when they design homes of similar proportions to fit modern lifestyles. Affiniti Architects followed that model when creating this Paragreen residence in Boca Raton.

than walk-ins. Neither family members nor guests, after all, are likely to spend time standing in the closet. If you install a reach-in closet, the space you save can become additional living area.

As you can see, homes do not have to be large to be functional, comfortable and beautiful. Another advantage to building a smaller home is less upkeep. Smaller homes do, however, require more creative architectural design.

Thus, when you begin searching for an architect and a contractor, look for individuals with exceptional communication skills (you want them to listen to and to understand your needs). Also, ensure that they are meeting the demands of the current market with professionalism and innovation.

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The opinions expressed in *Real Estate Weekend* are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of *The Palm Beach Post*.



Photo by Jonathan Kolbe

Architects must successfully incorporate a client's wish list into a home with limited square footage. Affiniti Architects created this house for a client at Paragreen in Boca Raton.

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