

Right-Sized home design



Canin Cottage Series

Today's new homebuyers are searching for homes that offer them the most square footage they can afford. They prefer larger family rooms and kitchens with one everyday eating area. Formal rooms that go largely unused most of the year, like living rooms and dining rooms, are on their way out. Sensible, practical and functional space is at the top of the buyer's "want" list, making the most of every square foot.

Buyers prefer quality of space over quantity of space. New trends in home design include each room being designed to the right size to fit each family's needs. "Right-Size" design is a more accurate term for describing a sensible approach to floor plan design. Plans that are not too small, but not too big either: plans that are "just right."



Years of research in custom home design, remodeling and home building has led Tony Weremeichik, Principal of Canin Associates' Architectural Design Studio, to be a strong advocate for home buyers and home owners to get the best design and construction value for their money. He leads clients and builders through a well-orchestrated design process that provides his clients with the utmost attention and creative design solutions. Tony can be reached at tweremeichik@canin.com or visit his company's website at www.canin.com.

Today's new home buyers are motivated by value, which usually means a smaller home. Although a smaller home is obviously less costly to build, it may not be attractive to buyers if it is tight and uncomfortable. New home plans not only have to be smaller, but smarter, and they have to be designed to live large; comfortably. Designing smarter plans is vital to capture buyers in this new era in home building.

Designers must do more with less square footage through efficient space planning, focusing on how to improve the quality and comfort of every space. Design expert Marianne Cusato, renowned for her efficient and charismatic Katrina Cottages, agrees from her book, *The Value of Design*: "Less is more. So do less, just do it really well."

{continued on next page}

What are some *right-sized* ideas?

- > Smaller, smarter floor plans
- > Quality of space over quantity of space
- > Eliminate wasted square footage
- > Simply-designed house shapes

What's *not*?

- > Costly and unnecessary luxury features
- > Designing big just for the sake of resale value
- > Seldom-used formal rooms
- > Over-sized floor plans and furniture

simplify: trending from extravagant → practical

The latest buyer preference surveys include buyers' partiality for smaller, more practical floor plans. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the median amount of floor area shrank in new home plans about eight percent from 2,291 square feet to 2,090 square feet and it is still trending downward from extravagant to practical.

Small floor plans become smarter when the rooms feel good and live well. They must be designed to be functional, livable and comfortable. According to a Better Homes and Gardens Magazine online survey, consumers admit they need fewer luxuries and "69% of participants said no-space-wasted design and ample storage will take on more importance in their next home."

Entice this buyer. Whether you are designing new plans or reviewing your current stock floor plan portfolio, re-evaluate room sizes. Focus on comfort - smaller spaces rely on adequate room dimensions to accommodate both furniture and circulation. Provide the best design value for kitchens, master bedrooms and bathrooms - the key rooms buyers critically examine the most.

A two to three percent reduction in your plans can save thousands of dollars. A 2,200 square foot plan can easily be condensed to 2,134 square feet and still retain the same layout, room count and features. This reduction is not as easy as slicing out a foot or two straight across the plan. Examine your plans room by room and design each space with the right surgical tolerances needed to furnish rooms and walk through them comfortably.



Canin Estrada Series Cottages

©2010 canin associates, inc.

WHAT'S THE STORY on smaller, smarter floor plans?

Flexible Spaces The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) reports that the number of bedrooms in new plans is also dropping, which translates into rooms with dual-purpose function. To attract a wide range of buyers, rooms need to be flexible – like a third bedroom that flexes as a home office, nursery, game room or playroom. Trade in a home office for a family computer desk in a discreet location – a place where guests won't notice a pile of bills but where parents can still monitor their kids using the internet.

Grow Homes Young buyers tend to look for homes that will meet their needs now and in the future. Unlike the generations before them, they plan on staying in their home longer and are not buying homes just for a return on their investment. Grow Homes are appealing to young buyers because they are designed for the size and price they can initially afford yet include pre-designed additions that they can add when needed. Examples of common pre-designed additions include a one or two car garage, a fourth bedroom, a home office or game room, a teen suite, etc. These additions, built later at the time they are needed, should be designed in economically square or rectangular-shaped

modules so they easily tie into the existing home. The end is an addition that looks like it was always a part of the original home.

What's Old is New Again - Cottages Cottage plans are popular again, but they are by no means new. We can learn from the charming Sears kit houses of the 1920s or from Frank Lloyd Wright's organic and affordable Usonian designs. Both utilized the same principles that are as pertinent today as they were back then – that everyone is entitled to a well-designed, beautiful home no matter their budget. The Canin Cottages, developed by Canin Associates, exemplifies this idea with sensibly-designed homes offered in a wide range from 450 to 2,500 square feet. With modern technologies and green features, they appeal to today's buyers.



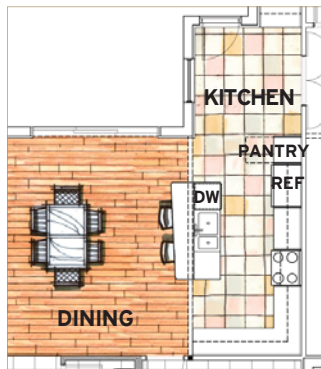
Small, Smart Grow Home Designs for Generation Homes. Jacksonville, Florida

Kitchens, Bathrooms & Bedrooms

According to the NAHB Consumer Preferences Survey for 2009, the family room and kitchen will increase in size in new homes. These family gathering spaces need to be roomy and comfortable, especially if the bedrooms are small. Focus on designing these key, memory-point spaces correctly:

Not-So-Big Kitchens

Kitchens can be the most costly space to build, and yet buyers prefer kitchens to be larger. According to the NAHB Economics and Housing Policy Group, buyer surveys show that the finished living area of the kitchen should average about 12 percent of the floor area of the home. Review your kitchen plans against this benchmark: oversized kitchens may be reduced in size yet still be functional and appropriate, which can lower the cost of the home. Another cost-saving idea is to reduce the number of wall cabinets or replace some of them with less-expensive shelves or spice racks. Examine the lengths of countertops and shrink them to the minimum standards for convenient work surfaces recommended by the National Kitchen and Bath Association.



Right-sized, functional kitchen with one everyday eating area.

Master Bathrooms

According to an American Institute of Architects (AIA) Home Buyers Preference Survey for 2009, soaking tubs are becoming less popular. Most buyers say they rarely use them and they have them only as a token for resale value. First-time buyers are willing to give up a tub they will rarely use in favor of a larger shower. However, buyers still want bathrooms with spa-like features. Design the master bathroom to accommodate both a tub and a shower, but offer a roomy shower standard and make a soaking or jetted tub an option. Some buyers are even willing to upgrade the shower “experience” with multiple shower heads and smart controls.

Master Bedrooms

Buyers also say they want larger master bedrooms. Try making them “ample.” Design the room with a compact layout that includes the bed, the nightstands and a dresser. Provide a comfortable 36”-42” circulation space

between the foot of a bed and a dresser, and along the sides of the bed. If the square footage in your plan allows, expand the overall room dimensions by an extra foot or two to make it feel “roomy.” Buyers will respond positively to the feeling of comfort in the room more than they will care about the actual dimensions.

How-To Guide for Designing Efficient Floor Plans

So how do you make the most of every square foot? Here are some tips on designing efficient floor plans for this new economy and to impress the hard-to-close buyer:

- Keep the building footprint simple - in a square or rectangular shape - and eliminate as many exterior corners as possible.
- Design your plan on graph paper. Align walls and snap them onto a modular grid using 16”, 24”, or 48” modules; these dimensions conform to prevailing building material sizes and equal spacing so there is less material cut and wasted. Plans designed this way are also easily adaptable for systems-built construction.
- Design the overall length or width of a plan on even 24” increments for even truss spacing. Keep roofs simple.
- For spacious floor plans, reduce or eliminate walls, doors, and other barriers where possible to open rooms to one another so spaces flow together and feel expansive. Reduce flooring transitions – use the same flooring to visually tie two spaces together.
- Reduce or eliminate hallways or any other excessive circulation areas.
- Eliminate unused formal rooms like living rooms and dining rooms.
- Eliminate extra eating nooks and keep one eating area, placed in a triangle layout together with the kitchen and family room.
- Reduce the size of secondary bedrooms. A room measuring 11 feet by 12 feet may be reduced eight to ten percent, and a resulting 10’-8” x 11’-0” room still furnishes the same way.
- Locate the air conditioner/heater in the center of the floor plan to save on lengths of ductwork.
- Place bathrooms back-to-back to share plumbing walls.
- Furnish rooms with properly-scaled furniture. Large furniture pieces make rooms feel cluttered.



Right-sized affordable luxury. 2015 new home narrow lot collection at Bella Collina.

BIG DESIGN IDEAS FOR SMALL SPACES

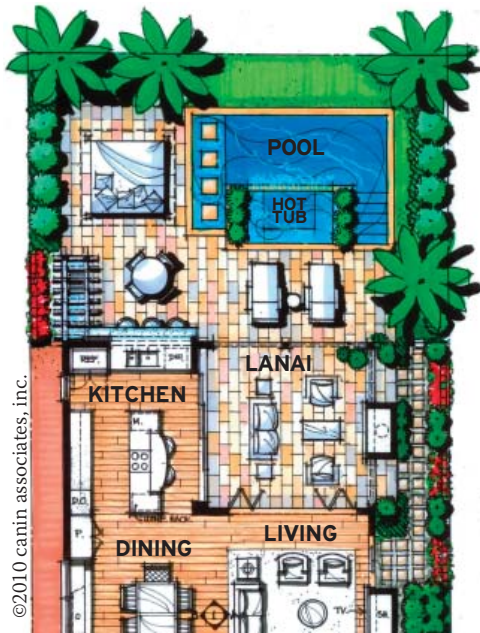
Ceilings Tall ceilings make rooms feel larger, so raise them. Nine foot ceilings, at a minimum, soar high on buyer preference surveys. Windows with their tops at eight feet above the floor allow natural light to penetrate deep into the rooms.

Daylighting Flood spaces with natural light everywhere possible; it too has a way of making smaller spaces feel larger and it is also proven to lift a person's spirits and well-being.

Outdoor Living Spaces Smaller spaces rely on the feeling of expansiveness, so blend the indoors with the outdoors by using windows and glass doors. Patio spaces should not be just "leftover" space in a floor plan. Design outdoor living spaces for what they are – outdoor rooms that have furniture for sitting and tables for eating, plus spaces out of the way of foot traffic to store gas grills or potential outdoor kitchens.

Storage Take full advantage of storage opportunities. Find pockets in volume spaces like above closets, under stairs and on empty walls. Better Homes and Gardens reports that demand for home organization systems is soaring. With less floor space, clever organization and storage is imperative.

Energy Efficiency According to Residential Design & Build Magazine's 2009 Market Trends survey, buyers' most asked-for feature was energy efficiency. Incorporate smart energy efficient products and materials into your design.



Design outdoor living spaces for what they are - outdoor rooms

CANIN ASSOCIATES

urban planning • landscape architecture • architectural design
500 delaney avenue orlando, florida 32801 407.422.4040

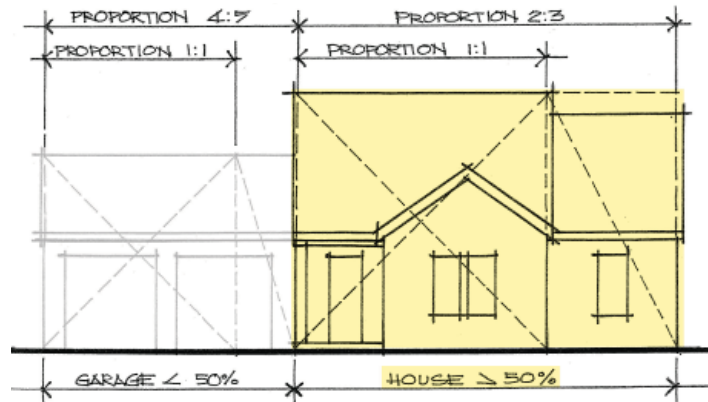
© copyright september 2010 canin associates, inc.
all rights reserved.

Don't Forget Curb Appeal!

Selling smaller, smarter homes also relies on strong curb appeal. Design trends in the homes' exteriors follow the simplicity and functionality of the inside. New home buyers shy away from cookie-cutter houses; pride of ownership is back. They are buying homes with lasting appeal and rich character. Elevation trends are a mixture of the old with the new, artfully-crafted traditional building forms with good proportions but with fresh, contemporary twists.

Smartly design the exterior using techniques that cost less and mean more:

- Design elevations with simple, pleasing compositional proportions. Homes with inherently beautiful building volumes do not need unnecessary architectural elements.



Massing proportions

- If cost-cutting includes reducing the depth of a porch to less than seven feet deep, it will not function or furnish properly, so replace it with an inviting, appropriately-scaled portico instead.
- Remove unnecessary and costly cosmetic ornaments, non-functional over-built gables or faux dormers.
- Limit exterior finish materials to two or three different types; any more can make the elevation look too complicated and wastes money. Keep it simple.
- Paint is economical and adds character. Bi- and tri-color palettes provide variety and enhance curb appeal. Colorful paint palettes express individuality and rely less on ornamentation to garner attention.
- Limit stone and brick to whole building elements. If that is too costly, simply eliminate it. Applying veneers up to common waist-high horizontal bands only admits that the material is too costly to use appropriately.

Focus on selling smaller, smarter homes that appeal to new home buyers. Rally your design team around the table whether you are reviewing your current floor plans or if you are writing a program for a new series of home plans. Also, bring in the experts – your sales and marketing professionals, home design professional, interior designer and construction team to review your plans for cost-savings. With these design ideas, you can easily right-size your floor plans and design them to be practical and smart to attract home buyers.

about our firm

Canin Associates believes great ideas and great placemaking merge when connections are made to the regional context, vernacular architecture and the cultural heritage of a region. Our 20-person, 30-year old interdisciplinary firm of idea-based professionals is committed to creating sustainable resort and mixed-use communities that enrich the quality of life and are wonderful places to live, work or visit.