

The average size of a newly built home decreased from a peak of 2,479 ft² to 2,422 ft²—the most significant drop ever recorded.

Home Trends Reflect Shift In Values

Quality More Prized Than Quantity

As the nation continues to recover from the effects of a troubled economy, home sizes have trended downward for the first time in three decades. More Americans seem to have also adopted a longer-term perspective, as homes that are smaller in scale are generally more affordable to maintain over time and have less impact on the environment. However, they are not necessarily less expensive to purchase if they are situated in a prime location and include more high-end features.

Findings of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Home Design Trends Survey suggest that home buyers and renovating homeowners alike are choosing efficient floor plans with less square footage so that they can still indulge their tastes for quality details, upgraded features and a higher degree of personalization. This key consumer survey also captured the following trends in the home marketplace in vivid detail.

New Priorities Trump Old Rules

The prevalence of non-traditional, open layouts with spacious kitchen and family room areas continues. Today's homeowners are looking for ways to maximize the square footage of their homes, so larger, more gathering-friendly casual spaces are often replacing rarely-used formal living and dining rooms.

Options Create Opportunities

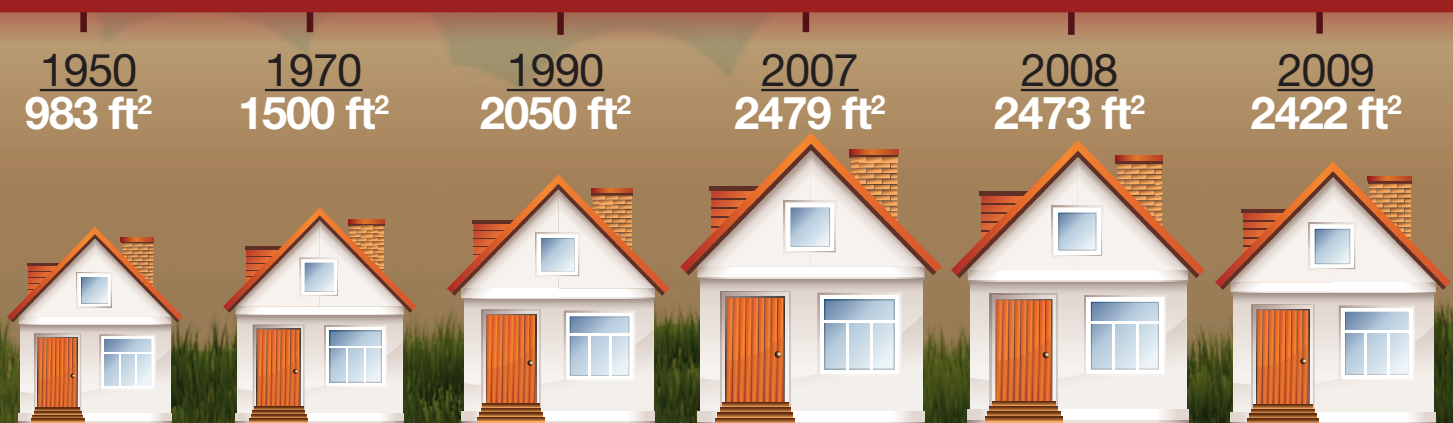
Many builders have incorporated flexible spaces that give buyers the option to dedicate a room to meet their specific needs and preferences or to serve multiple purposes. For example, a formal dining room calls for a chandelier and open access, whereas double doors and built-ins can easily create a private home office or library in the same space. It is now also more common for the owners of older homes to alter their floor plans to work better with the way they live.

Focus on Accessibility, Practicality, and Storage

A growing number of aging baby boomers drives the preference for one-level or two-story designs with the master bedroom downstairs. Storage features such as large closets and rooms with built-in shelves and cabinets maximize the use of space in a smaller footprint.

Average Size of a New Single Family House in the United States

Source: U.S. Census Bureau





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Making the Most of It

More trends that relate to the emphasis on utility and livability

Embracing the "Outdoor Room"

Homeowners are enhancing their properties by blending indoor and outdoor living areas that are suitable for entertaining family and friends. Decks, patios and porches are more popular than ever and are often furnished comfortably and decorated to coordinate with the home's interior spaces.

Homes Grow Greener

Consumers spend an average of \$1,900 each year on utility bills,* so a desire to trim the household budget often goes hand-in-hand with a homeowner's investment in upgrades that increase energy efficiency or water conservation. In many cases, these improvements pay for themselves with savings over time. Some of the most common features built into new homes and retrofitted into older ones include:

- o Insulated exterior doors
- o Low-emissivity (low-e) windows
- o Energy-efficient appliances, lighting and HVAC systems
- o Programmable thermostats
- o Tankless water heaters
- o Solar panels
- o Extra insulation
- o Water-saving plumbing fixtures and appliances

*Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Work at Home Means Less Play

A growing percentage of Americans are making their living at home. Many corporate employees work remotely at least once a month, and more than half of all small businesses are now home-based. Functional spaces that promote organization, concentration and productivity have become a top priority in many households, while guest suites, mud rooms and game rooms have declined in popularity.

Sources: WorldatWork Research Telework Trendlines 2009
U.S. Census Bureau

Nationwide surveys show that many homeowners now want fully functional residential spaces that are thoughtfully designed to match their lifestyle and that cost less to maintain over time. Ask your real estate professional if you would like to know which specific trends are most evident in your local area, especially if you are planning a renovation project that could impact your home's resale value.

Office Wins Most Popular Specialty Room

Source: AIA Home Design Trends Survey

