GETTING IT RIGHT: RIGHT-SIZING HOUSE PLANS

Professional Builder’s House Review design team presents four plans that trim the fat and focus on traffic flow, flexibility, and efficiency.

By Larry W. Garnett, FAIBD, House Review Lead Designer

We continue to hear that the average square footage of homes in the U.S. is shrinking and many buyers, especially the baby boomers, are considering down-sizing. Does that mean we’re finished building large homes? Certainly not. However, rather than building homes that are either too big or too small, we need to build them just the right size.

Instead of creating homes with multiple specific-use areas, such as formal dining rooms and isolated media rooms, consider the fact that many buyers are attracted to more flexible designs that include the home theater in the family room and a dining room that doubles as a craft area or library. Instead of a dedicated study, buyers are going with a compact resource center or pocket office with a laptop computer, desk, and file drawers.

Overall, right-sizing a house requires floor plans with smarter traffic flow, flexible spaces, and overall efficiency in both material and energy use. The House Review design team presents an array of homes that range from relatively small cottages to larger, more luxurious designs. However, each has been right-sized to be very efficient and functional, while maintaining a great deal of curb appeal and interior design flair.


At 1,715 square feet, this home has an economical footprint with plenty of flexibility. Each area in this right-sized plan has been designed to function with a minimal amount of square footage. Equally important is the attention that has been paid to both the traffic flow throughout the home and the privacy of the master suite.
Flexible second floor
(two bedrooms or one bedroom with game area)

Large storage and mechanical area

Area above the garage can serve as:
- Private guest quarters
- Home office
- Easily accessible storage that could be finished later

Optional guest quarters above garage

Large rear porch for outdoor living and entertaining

Main house is an efficient 38 x 30-foot rectangle

No formal dining room (dining table along with kitchen-island eating area)

Ample-sized master bedroom (13 feet, 4 inches x 14 feet)

Resource center with desk and files replaces separate study (most of us now rely on our laptops instead of desktop computers)

Spacious shower with no tub

“Pass-thru” hamper from master closet to laundry room

20 x 14-foot family room with plenty of seating and view of wide-screen TV (no fireplace)

Area above the garage can serve as:
- Private guest quarters
- Home office
- Easily accessible storage that could be finished later

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PLAN SIZE
First floor: 1,185 sf
Second floor: 530 sf
Optional room above garage: 340 sf
At just 2,800 square feet, the Theresa II is the perfect right-sized plan for move-up buyers or families looking to downsize into a more efficient home. With convenient amenities located throughout, such as the three-car-garage, mudroom, family office, and large master suite with walk-in closets, the Theresa II offers the same great lifestyle and conveniences found in much larger homes.

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PLAN SIZE
First floor: 1,371 sf
Second floor: 1,436 sf
Width: 54 feet
Depth: 52 feet

Interactive first-floor space is great for entertaining (includes kitchen, dining, and family rooms)
Flexible convenience spaces include an office off the dining room and a mudroom with an adjoining laundry room
Spacious three-car-garage

Large master suite with his and her sinks and walk-in closets
Loft seating area on the second floor
This lane-oriented cottage with room for a pool is perfectly right-sized for today’s starter family or move-down buyer. The concept of right-sizing extends beyond the purchase price to what a family can afford to up-keep over the years. So, at 1,358 square feet, this home hits all of the hot buttons, but at a size that is manageable and maintainable.

- Room for a pool in the tight envelope
- Stair location for optional granny flat
- Two-car garage and apron parking
- Add a wall AC unit and create a covered play area/cabana by the pool
- Option to enclose lanai into sun room, creating additional square footage
- Gourmet kitchen with bar seating, cafe, and laundry room
- Large grand room with fireplace, TV above, and view of backyard
- Optional jack and jill bath with removal of linen closet
- Luxurious master bath
- Den/home office with optional expansion space
- Depending on the municipality, the porch can be extended into the front setback
This issue we are focusing on right-sizing home designs. As an advocate for Lean design, I appreciate this timely subject. Buyers are very focused on value. Value is the driver to design and build homes that are efficient and void of waste. Multiple hallways, oversized foyers, and unnecessary rooms are a thing of the past. Lean-designed homes meet the buyers’ current needs while providing forward-looking spaces that reflect the demands of changing technology. This 1,575-square-foot home is designed for the empty nester and can be built as a single home or set up for a multi-family project.

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**PLAN SIZE**
**House**
- Living area: 1,575 sf
- Porches: 354 sf
- Width: 40 feet
- Depth: 62 feet

**Garage**
- Area: 450 sf
- Width: 21 feet, 4 inches
- Depth: 22 feet

**THE GEMSTONE**

**Bringing the outside in by creating a covered rear porch**
Sunroom is a flex space that can be converted to extended dining space
Eliminate extra dining space and have one space that is flexible enough to allow for an expanded dining table
Eliminate wasted hallway space and provide circulation from room to room
Large island provides a comfortable space for everyday eating. A double dishwasher provides ultimate convenience
The master tub has been eliminated. A large garden tub is no longer a requirement. Instead, allow for a large, two-headed shower.
The enlarged pantry allows for food storage and the ability to create an appliance garage
Travel compartment allows for on-the-go organization of carry-ons, toiletries, and other travel necessities
Relocating the stairs provides the opportunity to right-size the foyer
Secondary bath utilizes a tub/shower combo to replace the tub in the master bath
Sliding door allows access from the master closet to the laundry room, so dirty clothes go directly into a hamper or the washer
Pocket office takes the place of a large formal study
Right-sized mudroom accommodates a bench, small closet, and a drop zone/charging station
Flex space is critical to empty nesters. It can act as a study, guest bedroom, hobby space, or TV room.
Right-sized front porch — instead of being decorative, this space is large enough to allow for furniture and serves as an outdoor room.
Located on five acres, this home’s inspiration was to design spaces that are extremely efficient. The plan was to capture not only the views of the site, but also utilize the prevailing winds, direction of the sun, and the topography of the entire site.