

Practical right-sizing lessons



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Author and editor Gale Steves call right-sizing a new, more responsible approach to luxury living. “It’s a really check on how much space we really need,” she says.

And she offers advice on how you can make the most of your visit to HomeArama. Don’t just “ooh” and “ah” at the lush fabrics and furnishings, she says. Learn from the architects and interior designers. Many of the lessons will translate to your own home.



STEVES

Steves has written a new book, “Right-Sizing Your Home — How to make your house fit your lifestyle” (Northwest Arm Press, \$21.95). It’s filled with practical exercises that help you examine how your family uses its home, and checklists of the tradeoffs you’ll face as you make changes.

It also features pictures of furniture from companies you know — and whose chairs, sofas and tables you may already own: Bassett, Bernhardt, Lexington, Martha Stewart, Stanley, Universal and Vanguard.

As you walk through the showhouses, Steves suggests, study and make notes:

- There’s what she calls the “ugly” decision about living rooms and dining rooms “Do we still need these? I know this is the South, and very traditional, but many people have given up their dining rooms.” The dining room table is often moved to the great room — which also saves steps from the kitchen.

- Where do you and your family enter the home? Where do your friends enter? Steves says the back door can be as important as the front door, and well-equipped mudrooms are a must. The architects who created the HomeArama floor plans paid lots of attention to this detail.

- These homes, like many right-sized homes, have open layouts. That means you must consider noise, Steves says, and many people don’t. A master suite close to an open kitchen/great room area is convenient, but it can be noisier than one away from that hub. At HomeArama, downstairs master suites feature small foyers or vestibules for another layout of privacy. “Keeping it quiet,” Steves says, “is one of the most luxurious things we can do.”

- As you walk through the open kitchens, imagine yourself cooking in them. Ask yourself practical questions about how you’d function. What’s more, Steves suggests, imagine that the kitchen is a theater and you’re performing for your guests. For some cooks, the stove is the stage; for others, the island is the center of attention.

- “A right-sized home works for you today as well as tomorrow,” she says. Imagine yourself 10 years older. Would the features you fall in love with in the showhouses, or those in your own home, still accommodate you in a decade? What about the width of doorways, or the height of counters?

- Finally, don’t forget your tape measure. That sofa looks stunning floating in the center of a the great room. So, is it 70 inches or 80 inches? Inches matter to visual appeal and comfortable flow.

— Allen Norwood

