



NEW IDEAS

for Home Building or Remodeling
From “**Smart Homes**” to Downsizing – And More

By LISA COWNIE

From tiny homes to big barn doors, housing trends from 2017 will largely carry over into 2018. But there is one new trend emerging that will make the year an exciting one for those in the industry.

“The newest trends for homes seems to be ‘smart home,’ Vonda Herding, broker for the Mankato office of Edina Realty, said. “I think we will see more and more people automating functions within the home, for example temperature, lighting, voice activation and security. Technology will extend into the home, making normal life functions more convenient and instantaneous.”

Herding also said downsizing will take on a whole new meaning in 2018, in the form of tiny homes. Across the country, tiny homes are all the rage as individuals are trying to find an economical, or even portable, living option. It can also give homeowners freedom from big



mortgages and big concerns.

“I haven’t seen much (demand) for tiny homes in our market, but



I have heard people discuss them and did have a client inquire about the potential for a tiny home development. Although they aren't for everyone, the minimalist trend is more widespread. Even if people are deciding to hang onto their square footage, many more are starting to simplify both lifestyle and possessions," Herding said.

Speaking of possessions, a kitchen table is one that many are opting to go without.

"Large kitchen islands are still top of people's list when renovating their kitchen," Beth Fasnacht, owner of Timeless Interiors of Southern Minnesota, said. "The island has become the gathering place and has replaced the traditional dining table."

Herding agreed and said that while islands are certainly not a new concept, the way they are built is getting more progressive.

"New construction and remodeling projects are incorporating more of the bar/center island accent. Where the countertops don't match throughout the home, the perimeter of the countertops are one color and material, and the bar/island may be accented with a different color or material, for example, marble, granite or concrete, sometimes the island may also be a different type (of) wood," Herding said.

The interchanging of types and colors of wood in a room has become the norm.

Concrete has always been a common building material, but is starting to become an option in a decorative context.

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“Some homes are starting to sprinkle in the ‘vintage’ appearance as well, via light fixtures, sinks etc.,” Herding said. “Wood and wallpaper may have their place, not necessarily the paneling look of the 70’s, or the wallpaper borders of the 80’s, but (people are adding) more etched wood accent walls, or a bold wallpapered wall to make a bedroom or sunroom snap. Bold colors and florals are making a comeback, too.”

Fasnacht said people are also experimenting with materials when incorporating “barn doors” in their homes.

“Barn doors continue to be the trend in both homes and offices,” Fasnacht said. “And what many are realizing is that a barn door no longer means big wooden ‘barn’-looking doors. Barn door track systems are available in rustic designs and very contemporary designs, which also correlates with the doors themselves. They can be anything from reclaimed wood doors to sleek frosted glass doors, whatever will coordinate with the style of your home. The doors can act as an accent in a stationary position on the wall next to an opening or be a functional sliding door.”

Fasnacht says the color game is also getting a bit of a punch.

“Everyone wants to jump on the ‘gray train’ but worry that it won’t work with their 80’s and 90’s era wood tones,” she said. “But, it can be done. There are lots of gray/taupe paint colors that will coordinate with virtually any existing wood tone. The key is to grab all the gray/taupe paint swatch cards you can and bring them home to put next to your existing woodwork - even the colors you don’t like under the fluorescent lighting in the store. Look at them at various times throughout the day and evening; your home lighting and natural light can greatly change how a color looks. If you’re still not sure, there are plenty of interior designers out there that would love to help you choose one”

Lisa Cownie writes from North Mankato. Her work can be found at lisacownie.com.

Those who choose the tiny house lifestyle tout many benefits of the phenomena. Those include:

- Low or no mortgage
- Portable housing
- Small footprint
- Energy savings

The average size of a tiny house is between 100 and 400 square feet. That compares to an average of between 2,200 and 2,600 square feet of more traditional new homes being built. The smaller compact living space is attractive to individuals of all ages, including recent college graduates, newlyweds, or even retirees.



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