

Home Improvement Corner

How much would you be willing to sacrifice in your home if your lifestyle depended on it?

When consulting with prospective clients, we often use automotive analogies like: “remodeling by cost per square foot is like buying a car by the pound”; or “your decision to buy a Mercedes instead of a Buick establishes the value you place on quality, service and warranty”. Car analogies like these can even delve further into lifestyle choices. For example, I recently exchanged a Jeep Grand Cherokee for a Mini Cooper S convertible as my primary vehicle. Needless to say, this made for a significant lifestyle change. After relying on an ultra-compact vehicle for a couple months now, I realize that my desire for an SUV came more from what I was accustomed to, rather what I was really in need of: more fun with a lesser “footprint”.

Ironically, my personal story draws a parallel to what consumers are increasingly asking for in residential design. Led by concepts published in Sarah Susanka’s book “The Not So Big House”, and fueled by the green building movement in the wake of the global warming concept, consumers are realizing the benefits of utilizing more of their home’s wasted spaces. Whether for storage, accessibility or enjoyment, the little nooks and crannies that were once attics, stairwells or voids are filling up with creative and strategic uses for bookshelves, entertainment systems and wine cellars. Multiple rooms are being combined to improve flow, and in some cases, homeowners are downsizing altogether by moving into condos and townhomes. They are in effect making conscious decisions to have more fun with a lesser “footprint”.

I’ve been in enough homes to know that we as a society will fill the available space – often to the point we can’t park in the garage anymore. Try asking yourself: what’s it worth to me to improve the enjoyment of my home

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