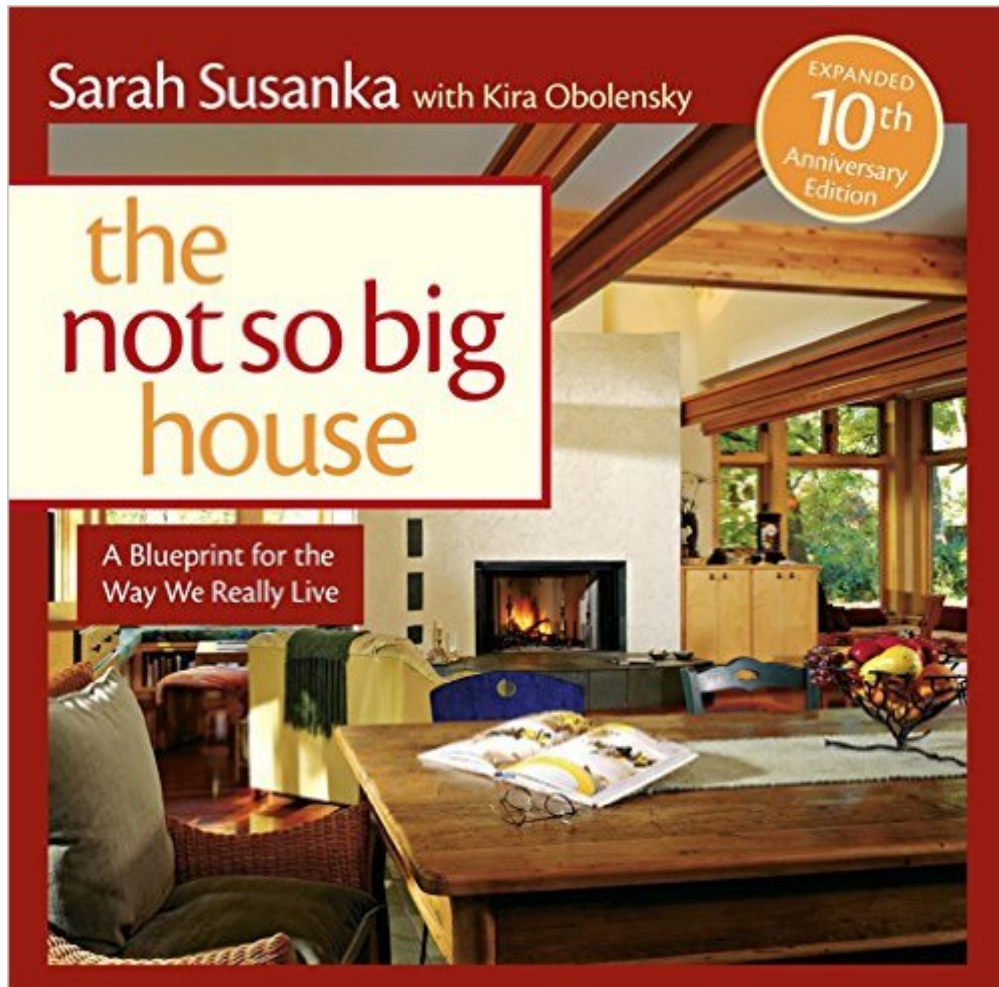


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# The Not So Big House: A Blueprint For The Way We Really Live



## Synopsis

Ten years ago, Sarah Susanka started a revolution in home design with a deceptively simple message: quality should always come before quantity. Now, the book that celebrated that bold declaration is back in this special 10th anniversary edition featuring a new introduction and 16 additional pages that explore three new homes. Nearly a quarter-million people bought this ground-breaking book when it was published in Fall 1998. Since then, the book's simple message -- that quality should come before quantity -- has started a movement in home design. Homeowners now know to expect more. And the people responsible for building our homes have also gotten the message. Architects and builders around the country report clients showing up with dog-eared copies of *The Not So Big House*, pages marked to a favorite section. Why are we drawn more to smaller, more personal spaces than to larger, more expansive ones? Why do we spend more time in the kitchen than we do in the formal dining room? *The Not So Big House* proposes clear, workable guidelines for creating homes that serve both our spiritual needs and our material requirements, whether for a couple with no children, a family, empty nesters, or one person alone. In 1999, Sarah Susanka was then architect and principal with Mulfinger, Susanka, Mahady & Partners, the firm selected to design the 1999 Life Dream House brought Frank Lloyd Wright's same common-sense, human-scale design principles to our generation. Consider which rooms in your house you use and enjoy most, and you have a sense of the essential principles of *The Not So Big House*. Whether you seek comfort and calm or activity and energy at home, *The Not So Big House* offers a place for every mood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I first heard of this book when I saw an interview with Charlie Rose and the author in 1999. When I bought the book, I was disappointed at how large the houses were. I had just finished college with plans of being a teacher: not a high pay position, especially in the state of North Dakota. At the time, I figured I could never buy these kinds of houses. Fast-forward to now. I am currently the owner of a 675 square foot home. It is one-third the size of the next smallest house in my neighborhood: the only survivor of replacement of the first homes in the neighborhood. I can't afford an architect, but I've realized that Susanka's philosophy is scalable. The floor plan of my house is brilliant. Space is used very well so that all the rooms feel large. The main idea behind Susanka's book is to sacrifice square footage in favor of better design. My current kitchen is far smaller than the one in the rental house I lived in last year. It has at least 4 times the counter space and storage. I was amazed how much room I had in the kitchen: on paper it's tiny, but it operates as a huge room. I could go on and on about each room. Brilliant design gives me all kinds of use in each room. More importantly, I use every room in the house every day. I've never been able to say that about any place I've lived in. In previous houses and apartments, there were always rooms that I could avoid for months on end. This is the core of Susanka's argument. She is not arguing for small houses. She is arguing for houses that are smaller than what we think we want. If we make the houses smaller, we can spend the money on better materials and more intelligent design. A wealthy person will probably build a larger home. Perhaps they can build it at 3000 square feet rather than 5000 square feet.

I see some complaints that people are quantifying the square footage of the Not So Big House. YES, some of them are still big... For some big families, 4000 sq ft might be Not So Big. For some individuals who like to live big, even 4000 sq ft might be Not So Big. I think another term that could be used would be JUST RIGHT. For one person, depending on his/her lifestyle, 4000 sq ft might be Just Right. Some people are saying "What?!? I live in 1,500 sq ft" or even "800 sq ft" ... and this book "has examples of 2,500 sq ft... that's not 'Not So Big'!!!". Well, yes, FOR THAT PERSON. Again, it's not about the actual size. It's about being JUST RIGHT. Again, the complaints of some reviewers focus really on area covered, rather than the real focus of the book: quality of life in one's living space. The book does say, in one example, that a couple with children moved from a 4,000 sq ft McMansion to a 2,500 sq ft house THAT WAS NOT MUCH MORE INEXPENSIVE than the 4,000 sq ft house -- in other words, it costs almost as much, even though it is only roughly 60% the size of

their former bigger house. But, the point is, this book was giving ideas on how we really use rooms and areas of the house, so not only are the areas of use maximized, but also ENJOYED. Spend on details like trimmings, lighting, etc... on details that count (to make it cozy, inviting, warm, or whatever effect one is after), instead of area, and instead of having just a big house, you end up with a LIVEABLE house. And this is where this book shines: it shows examples (and comparisons of) big (and even impressive) rooms and houses that seem cold and uninviting, to a smaller area (again, smaller being relative) that is WELL DESIGNED, not to impress, but rather to be a place where one wants to be.

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