

THE FUTURE OF HOME



Ozzie and Harriet would never recognize the new American home. Their neat little colonial was the benchmark of a stable time: Mom in the kitchen, Dad in the study, David and Ricky quietly composing homework (or pop songs) in their bedrooms. Fast-forward 44 years, and the American home is a far more fluid place. For starters, Mom is no longer walled away in the kitchen. The kitchen and living room have melded into one great room, the epicenter for all family interaction. The dining room is virtually extinct, and the bathroom is transforming from a quiet privy into an all-out media cocoon.

In the 21st century, American life is anything but stable. In this new world, China is a hardline competitor, baby boomers are graying and even the climate is shifting. The Great Recession has turned our piggy banks and our lives upside down. Mindful consumerism has taken the place of conspicuous consumption. Green living has become a priority for folks who want to save money along with those who want to save the Earth. And mobile media allows us to move through the world with our personal and cultural connections in place, making home a state of mind as much as a location.

In "The Future of Home," we'll look at just how our changing world is reshaping our families, our lives and our homes.



Good Night, John-Boy



2,094
square feet

Average size of the new
single-family American
home in 2009, down 100
square feet from 2008

Source: National Association of Home Builders'
International Builders' Show

The traditional nuclear family—2.5 kids, a golden retriever and a minivan—still exists, but many American families are expanding to include college grads and grandparents, too. Driven partly by an anemic economy, many families are welcoming several generations under one roof. About 6.6 million American homes had three generations living in the same house last year, a 30 percent jump over 2000, according to census figures. When defined as at least two adult generations under one roof, a record 49 million, or one in six people, live in “multigenerational” households, according to a recent Pew Research Center study.

Boomerang kids, the college grads who move home after school, are staying longer now that job prospects have thinned. A wave of Hispanic and Asian immigrants, more likely to live with extended family, are also among this group. Although immigrants assimilate and young workers leave the nest, the biggest driver of multigenerational families is also the demographic with the most staying power: aging baby boomers. Many boomers already care for elderly parents, but they too will need help in their golden years. Seventy-eight million baby boomers are coming into an aging demographic, according to AARP, meaning more and more Americans will need more housing and caregiving choices. Moving in with grown children allows seniors to age in place while providing child care for grandkids.

3,393
square feet

Size of the Barcelona plan
multigenerational home
offered by Youngquist
Homes in Cary, N.C.



Homes with multiple generations call for larger socialization spaces—such as the great room—as well as more bedrooms and, in some cases, additional living quarters with their own kitchens and bathrooms. Youngquist Homes in Cary, N.C., is just one developer designing homes specifically for multigenerational families. According to the company's website, "first-floor master and guest suites combined with large, open gathering areas make these homes ideal for multigenerational living."

Multigenerational homes will also call for universal design, a movement promoting all structures be accessible to everyone. Ergonomically designed products that benefit old and young will be in demand here. In the kitchen this could mean lower countertops—32 inches is ideal for children, the elderly or anyone not 6 feet tall—plus pull-down shelves and one-touch appliances with large, LED-lit buttons. In the bathroom, pull-down grab bars for the toilet can aid elderly seniors and toddlers learning to toilet train, while transfer tubs with bump-out lips make it easier to get in and out of the bath. In newly designed homes, stacked closets can accommodate future elevators. Wide, stepless entryways make getting around easier for residents old and young.

65
square feet

Footprint for the
tiniest home offered
by Tumbleweed Tiny
House Co.

48%

Number of U.S. consumers who plan to remodel their kitchen in 2010

Source: 2010 U.S. Remodeling Sentiment Report, www.remodelormove.com



From Way Station to Destination



51%

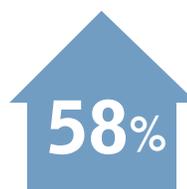
Number of Americans saying they will be cooking from scratch more

Source: Mintel, *Changes in cooking patterns and appliance use for those eating in/at home more*, July 2009

With the world in so much flux, Americans are rethinking their definition of home. In flusher times, home was a pit stop, a place to drop your keys between outings. With less cash to spread around, Americans are rediscovering home as the ultimate destination. We work at home. We dine in. We host movie night. Once again, we live at home.

Five years ago, consumers turned to the bedroom to pamper themselves with high-count bedsheets, memory-foam mattresses and sound devices. Back then, home was mostly a place to sleep. Now, "people are emerging from their insecurities...inviting others into their home in order to entertain," says Callie Jenschke, proprietor of the design firm Scout, based in New York City. "They want to nurture their homes." In turn, they're refocusing on the rooms of the house that nurture others. The kitchen, living room, backyard patio or deck are places where folks spend their social time. "If they have money," adds Jenschke, "they want to spend it on that open space."

Everything about those spaces—from the refrigerator to the television, from the sofa to the dining table—must be beautiful and multifunctional. A collection of small sofas might replace one large one, since a quick seating rearrangement can move



Number of Americans eating at home more often than before

Source: Mintel, *Changes in eating out or cooking habits in past year*, July 2009



the room from takeout and TV to a casual cocktail party. A dining table with leaves can be a home office by day and a buffet by night. Storage becomes most important here, as clutter is reminiscent of the rampant consumerism that got us into a financial and household mess. Clean lines and edited belongings help telegraph not only who a homeowner is but also who she isn't—a hoarder, an übermaterialist, a weapon of massive consumption.

Those few prized belongings will be carefully chosen statement pieces, Jenschke says: "People are trying to create their own unique space. People don't want what everyone else has." Customization has moved into the home in the form of eclectic design. From mix-and-match table legs to appliances with a stylish pop, everything is an opportunity for self-expression.

Small, Sustainable and Smart



Backstage, Americans will demand more function from their homes, even as their dwellings get smaller. New home developers are scaling back to fit with the new American budget. In years past, people who invested huge sums in the housing market expected a huge return down the road. Now that market is vulnerable, and spending your life savings on a mini-mansion seems foolish. Couple that with concerns about sustainability, energy supply and water demands, and you'll see why small homes are gaining traction.

In Virginia Beach, Va., home developer Widener Corp. is building single-family homes in the vicinity of 2,000 to 2,500 square feet, down from dot-com era McMansions that measured upwards of 5,000 square feet. Storage solutions, multipurpose rooms, connections to the outdoors and attention to detail make small homes feel big. In these homes, the family room doubles as a media center. The backyard becomes a play zone or hobby center for dedicated gardeners. The garage will have a wood shop. The home office will have a sofa for brainstorming or power napping.

These homes will also be more self-sustaining. In this environment-conscious age, homeowners are more motivated than ever to save energy and cultivate their own resources. Bottled water will go down the drain as more homeowners opt for whole-house water-filtration systems. Solar panels and solar-power roof shingles—about \$25,000 for enough to tile an average roof—will allow homes to produce their own energy, perhaps with enough left over to sell back to the power company. Compost bins and rainwater collection systems will become standard issue for serious home gardeners. More and more, backyard gardens will yield fresh produce rather than just cut flowers.



\$22
billion

Approximate annual
revenue for the entire
U.S. appliance industry
in 2008

Source: "By the Numbers: Washing Machines Head Up the Class for Smart Appliances," *ConsumerReports.org*, March 17, 2010



\$5.46
billion

Projected U.S. sales of
smart appliances by 2015

Source: "Smart Appliance Report 2010," Zpryme
Research & Consulting



In the short term, consumers exhaling after a long recession will start making long-deferred purchases. Those able to turn in old appliances as part of the federal government's "dollars for dishwashers" rebate will trade up to more energy-efficient models. But they won't need a cash incentive to do so. Energy savings has become a watchword across the United States, one synonymous with saving money and Mother Earth.

In the long term, smart appliances—those that monitor their own energy consumption—will become mainstream. "People want to do good," says Annie Block, articles editor at *Interior Design* magazine.

"So quick little data points let them know what products are better for the environment."

Manufacturers at the 2010 International Builders' Show in Las Vegas unveiled a host of smart appliances, including Whirlpool's top-loading washing machines. The Cabrio washers use optimal water levels, and monitors display real-time energy use. GE's new generation of appliances works with power grid smart meters to determine when power is most expensive, then trims back energy use at those times. The company's pilot studies have shown smart appliances could cut energy bills by 10 to 20 percent, though retail prices represent a significant upfront investment. One Whirlpool washer-dryer combo costs about \$4,000, about twice the price of today's standard energy-efficient models. Costly, yes, but the new American consumer will expect his or her appliances to last and is calculating savings over the long haul.

The Sweet Smell of Home



42%

"I have tried aromatherapy air fresheners and like them."

Source: Mintel: Attitudes toward and preferences for air fresheners, September 2009

Moving beyond scented candles and plug-in air fresheners, designers at the cutting edge of fragrance are looking for ways to make scent as integral a part of home as vision. Scent is already widely used as a mood-management technique in spas and home spas nationwide. Fennel, lavender and cedarwood are prized as calming scents; peppermint, rosemary and basil energize; orange and ginger are believed to be aphrodisiacs. Already, consumers' cabinet shelves are lined with essential oils, body sprays and linen fresheners.

Next, modern designers will take scent mainstream not just as a momentary mood enhancer but as an integral part of environment. Posh public places are already imbued with signature scents—hotels, private clubs, even new automobiles boast a scent that is also a unique sensory tag. "Restaurants and hotels are driving people's design choices, because people can go into those spaces and try it out without having to commit," says Jenschke. Consumers smelling something in the air at their favorite places will likely try to bring the experience home.

At "Headspace: On Scent as Design," a symposium hosted by Parsons The New School for Design in connection with Seed Media Group and other sponsors, more than a dozen designers experimented with scent as a stimulus and an environmental building block. "What if you could embed the smell of money into the wallpaper—then when you scratch the wall, you'd feel rich?" asked Sissal Tolaas, an artist who did something similar for the private lounge at UBS. Tolaas also tried to use the scent of phobic men as an evacuation alarm distributed through a building's air ducts.

At home, one imagines the applications would be more about positive mood management—calming scents at the end of a long day, aphrodisiacs after a successful date and maybe even a scent to clear out party guests. A scent called Puberty, designed by product designer Ayse Birsel, just might do the trick. None of the symposium guests liked it. "Well, nobody likes puberty, so it's a successful smell," she told *The New York Times*. "That was the intention."



The Media Cocoon

Media is truly the third space, and our future homes will be wired for constant consumption. In the 21st century, our mobile devices are personal media hubs. We dip in and out of the third space on the bus, at work and outside. The four walls of a house are no different. Americans already spend their nights watching high-definition on-demand video, playing Wii games and discount shopping online. Those family activities most often take place in the common living area. In practice, however, we can access media anywhere in the home thanks to WiFi, laptops and smart phones.

In a few years, Americans will have taken it a step further. Already, those on the cutting edge of home design are turning their bathrooms into media centers, with flat-panel televisions hidden behind two-way mirrors. The TV appears only when the television is on, otherwise it disappears behind the glass. Waterproof speakers enhance the experience. If your equipment is connected through a home automation system, you can channel surf, play music and watch DVDs in the shower with a waterproof remote.

Right now, digital media systems are only being used by early adopters. But they streamline media consumption and cut clutter, two hot buttons for American consumers. Look for these systems to go wide in a few years, when Americans

“Close the door,’ a blue-lighted message displayed on one Panasonic microwave oven’s display, for the particularly confused cook.”

—“Kitchen Gadgets Take the Fast-Food Mentality Into the Home,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 2010



will store all their media on one central digital brain, eliminating bulky DVDs and CDs and allowing families to access their media in any room of the house.

The American home is moving toward a threshold in which home and mobile life will be seamless. Already, iPhone users can turn their devices into the ultimate universal remote, able to program any of 14,000 infrared gadgets in your home. Likewise, the PICOwatt plugs into any large appliance, allowing for mobile control. Users can create schedules for running the dishwasher or controlling the heat. In the future, the device’s manufacturer hopes you will be able to download real-time utility rates to schedule off-peak runs.

Why stop there? CytexOne, a high-end technology company with the slogan “Live Like the Jetsons,” promises homeowners the ability to control their home environment from anywhere using their smart phone. Draw your shades on sunny days. Draw a bath on your way home from work. Play karaoke in the bathroom. Video conferencing for the home office, nanny cams for the nursery, remote entry for repairmen—all of it possible using a smart phone.

“There are systems which are really integrated. You can preheat your oven from the supermarket,” says Block. “I think tech is really going to be important in the future because tech-savvy men are getting in the kitchen.”

Appliances are getting software upgrades, too. One upcoming Whirlpool washer-dryer offers laundry apps that allow homeowners to customize a cycle based on the stains on their clothes. CytexOne founder Dan Levine is at work on a program that would scan the bar code on an empty container near the garbage pail and add it to a grocery list. And with so many personal metrics jammed into our mobile devices—miles run, calorie counts, hypoglycemic index—how soon will it be before mobile-synched refrigerators make menu suggestions?



Simple and Sweet



If it all seems a bit complicated, take a deep breath. It's not. Despite the beeps and blips, the extra family members and the smart appliances, the future of home is all about keeping it simple. Why travel 20 miles to visit Grandma's retirement village when she could live right down the hall? Why collect an army of stain treatments when your washer can do it for you? And why amass a library of DVDs when a digital media center is keeping your shelves clear of clutter?

From one-touch appliances to easy-to-reach shelves, the new American home will be about simplicity—in substance and style. Homebuyers prefer low-maintenance brick exteriors, classic-looking dark wood, clean white cabinets and simple, elegant details in every corner of their home. Keyless entries make life simpler, as do automated lawn sprinklers—soon to be hooked up to computers that monitor weather conditions to avoid waste.

More and more, our homes will reflect our new values. And although those values will differ from house to house, there will be a few constants driving the market: simple enjoyment, renewed concerns for the environment, groundbreaking technology. These are the future of home.



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