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The Not So Big House:
A Blueprint for the Way We Really Live
10th Anniversary Edition
By Sarah Susanka with Kira Obolensky
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URLs: <http://www.notsobig.com>; <http://www.notsobighouse.com>

“Not So Big” Turns Ten **Announcing the 10th Anniversary Edition of** **Sarah Susanka’s *The Not So Big House***

NEWTOWN, CT (Sept. 23, 2008) In 1998, architect and cultural visionary Sarah Susanka launched a modern revolution in house design with her groundbreaking first book, *The Not So Big House: A Blueprint for the Way We Really Live*. For the past ten years, Susanka and her Not So Big[®] philosophy have continued to influence the American home and lifestyle with her call to “build better, not bigger houses” and lead “better, not bigger lives.”

This September, The Taunton Press is celebrating the continued and increasing significance of Susanka’s “Not So Big” message with a special 10th Anniversary edition of *The Not So Big House*. The beautiful hardcover edition features a new cover, a new introduction and a new chapter. This new chapter includes three sustainably designed “Not So Big” houses from Minnesota, North Carolina and Washington, each of which came about as a result of the influence of the first edition of *The Not So Big House*.

“It’s rare for a topic to remain timely for over a decade, and yet from my perspective it seems that the continuation of interest has been one long warm-up to the present moment,” says Susanka. “People today seem far more excited about ‘Not So Big’ because now they’ve come to appreciate both its value in improving their lives and its importance in securing the well being of the country and the planet for future generations.”

The Not So Big Movement and Sustainable Design

With the current downturn in the housing market, the crisis brought about by our over-consumption and shifting social attitudes toward finding meaning in our lives, “Not So Big” has provided the groundwork for individuals seeking a new blueprint for living.

“*The Not So Big House* is really about livability,” explains Susanka. “When the place we live is the right size for the way we really live and the things that really matter to us, we are ourselves in balance.”

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One decade after the book's launch, the original six chapters of *The Not So Big House* ring just as true today as they did ten years ago. The values of living responsibly, sustainably and meaningfully no longer seem odd or extreme. Now, more than ever, homeowners are choosing smaller, beautifully designed, energy efficient and unpretentious homes that feed their spirit, rather than simply impressing the neighbors. Recent data supports this understanding. According to data collected by the National Association of Homebuilders, **the average size of a new home in the United States has started to level off at just under 2,500 square feet.**

The Not-So-Small Impact of “Not So Big”

At the end of the 1990s, downsizing was a foreign concept. Just weeks after its release, *The Not So Big House* shot up to number one on Amazon.com, placing Susanka at the forefront of the conversation about bringing balance back into our lives through downsizing – or rightsizing – our homes.

“Not So Big” has become the rallying cry for architects, designers, builders, homeowners and others seeking an alternative to the McMansion (or “starter castle,” as Susanka calls them) mentality by providing a common language to describe the qualities of home. Susanka has opened eyes with her message that a house should appeal first and foremost to the homeowner, rather than focusing on impressing the neighbors or the needs of an imagined future buyer.

Today, the concepts of “rightsizing” and “Not So Big” have been embraced by a world of thought leaders, luminaries, political leaders, homeowners and professionals, and the mentality has become a huge influence in the lives of millions around the world.

About Sarah Susanka, F.A.I.A., www.NotSoBig.com

Susanka is the author of seven books that collectively weave together home and lifestyle, revealing that a “Not So Big” attitude serves not only architectural aims, but life goals as well. Her books have sold well over one million copies and include: *The Not So Big House*, *Creating the Not So Big House*, *Not So Big Solutions for Your Home*, *Home By Design*, *Inside the Not So Big House*, *Outside the Not So Big House* and *The Not So Big Life*. Her forthcoming title, *Not So Big Remodeling*, is scheduled for release in spring of 2009. Susanka is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects and a Senior Fellow of the Design Futures Council. She was born in Kent, England, and lives in North Carolina. Join her online community at www.NotSoBig.com.

About The Taunton Press

The Taunton Press, www.taunton.com, is a trusted source of valuable information and inspiration on the house and home, including home building and design, cooking, crafting, and woodworking. Millions of consumers purchase our books, magazines, DVDs, and use our website to improve their skills and expand their horizons. Taunton is a privately held publishing company headquartered in Newtown, Connecticut.

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Ten Tips for Designing “Not So Big” According to Sarah Susanka

1. **Not So Big doesn't have to be small** – There is no one correct size or budget for a Not So Big house. A Not So Big house focuses on the qualities of the space, rather than sheer quantity of square footage, to meet the dreams and aspirations of the homeowners. Susanka provides a rule of thumb – “It's about one third smaller than you thought you needed, with dollars reappointed from square footage to characteristics that turn house into home.”
2. **Make it personal** – A Not So Big house appeals first and foremost to its homeowners. It is like a custom shirt, tailored to fit the homeowners and to provide them with a sense of livability and comfort they never before thought possible.
3. **Design for sustainable living** – A Not So Big house is more than the sum of its parts. It is designed and built to last for generations and made in an energy efficient and sustainable way. But most important of all, it is beautiful to look at and to live in, one of the frequently overlooked characteristics of a truly sustainable structure; we take care of those items we find beautiful. A Not So Big house is a reflection of its homeowners, allowing more time and energy to be focused on those things that give their lives meaning, rather than impressing others.
4. **A good neighbor** – A Not So Big house fits into its setting by respecting the views from the adjacent homes and fitting into the existing streetscape in scale and character.
5. **A better floor plan for today** – In a Not So Big house, all the space is used every day. Many of the rooms do double duty and are used for several of different activities over the course of the day. Spaces that are rarely used are eliminated. With a more open floor plan, adjacent spaces benefit from the presence of each other to give the house greater flexibility and spaciousness without the appearance of excess square footage.
6. **Interior views** – A Not So Big house features long, diagonal views through adjacent spaces to extend the perceived scale of the house. A strategically placed window or lighted focal point at the end of a view through the house draws the eye towards the farthest point and accentuates the sense of spaciousness.
7. **Varying ceiling heights** – We typically think in terms of a floor plan, which shows *length* and *width* only, but the third dimension of *height* is an equally useful tool. It shapes our experience of a space and can help to make less feel like more. Lower ceiling heights over smaller, less dominant activity areas contrast with the heights of the now taller, more important spaces, creating a hierarchy of places, from sheltered and intimate to open and expansive.
8. **Sense of shelter** – A Not So Big house uses a variety of visual cues to provide a degree of separation between open spaces without resorting to a solid wall to accomplish the task. Sheltering devices, such as a raised counter, rug, floating ceiling section or beam indicate where one space stops and the next begins, to provide a sense of shelter around the activity taking place.
9. **Pleasingly proportioned** – A Not So Big house features rooms of appropriate proportioning for our human scale that are designed to feel both spacious and intimate. Variations in ceiling height and other architectural elements create rooms that are suitable for groups of people, while still being comfortable for just one or two.
10. **Attention to detail** – No matter where you look in a house, everything should be thought through and designed to perfectly support the needs of the homeowners who live there. Comfort and functionality are qualities designed into a Not So Big house to make it both inspiring to live in and a perfectly crafted container for everyday living.