



475  
SQUARE FEET

PROJECT | Great Room, Lazy Bear Ranch



## WHY SQUARE FOOTAGE DOES NOT MATTER.

Developers, brokers and real estate gurus have trained homebuyers to think in square feet, convincing them that adding hundreds of square feet of floor space automatically makes a home better. The truth is, you cannot judge worth and efficiency by size. A bigger home, like a bigger balloon, is mostly just a lot more air.

I once asked a developer how much their cookie-cutter colonial would cost to build if it were half the size. The answer was not much less. Here's why: It would still have the same number of windows and doors, fixtures and appliances and a stair case; it would just have a little less concrete and a lot less sheet rock. This is a nice trick since the bigger house would sell for twice as much if you judge it only by its square footage. But what if you judged it for the space and resources that are wasted... would you then say it is only half as good?

Today, we demand efficiency and value in our cars, our flat screen TVs and iPhones, in our

clothing and our food. Why shouldn't we demand efficiency and value in our homes?

**A GOOD HOME IS ONE THAT DELIVERS GOOD VALUE THROUGH EFFICIENT, PRACTICAL, AND EXPRESSIVE DESIGN FUNCTIONALITY.**

Almost every family has the same needs in a home: rooms to use together and rooms to be alone, places to eat and sleep, and opportunities to make it their own. A big home that accomplishes this with no soul and no character will be a bore and an expense to live in once the thrill of having "all that square footage" wears off. So why do people end up in too-big homes? The answer is fear. People have been convinced that for resale, only bigger is better, that an innovative home with a modest footprint will not be appreciated when it's time to sell, even if it is more efficient and of a higher quality.

Fortunately, there are some people who have not bought into the fear and have created their personal vision of an ideal home. People who understood that a place filled with character, soul and sensibility would be the only home worth building. How do you measure if a home lives up to such standards? Certainly not by the square foot, because good rooms with great character actually look bigger and serve more functions than their square footage might lead you to believe. You can judge how well the architecture functions by asking yourself these questions: Is it well built? Does it suit the setting? Does it match its function?

Trust your heart but use your head when planning your next home or renovation. Invest in quality, not simply in square footage. Quality does not come cheap, it's better to invest in a few good rooms. A good

room will be able to serve multiple functions so you get more out of it than a one-use-only room. A formal living room or dining room is generally reserved for guests and is never used otherwise. What is the purpose of these rooms and how did they come about? The purpose is to assure the homeowner that there are at least two rooms in the house that will always be impressive. Who's to say that the everyday living and dining space of the house can't be impressive? An architecturally interesting space has the "wow factor" all the time. Not only is the old way of thinking a waste of space it is also a waste of energy: Heating and cooling rooms that are hardly ever used squanders resources and money needlessly.

What makes a good room good? A well-shaped room can provide an enduring sense of interest for its occupants. Strategically placed

windows can provide any home with a spectacular view of nature, even if it is just the expansiveness of the sky or the stars at night. A tall room that has a corresponding set of carefully placed tall windows will bring the outdoors in, making even a modest footprint seem palatial. Rooms designed to respond to the specific climatic conditions of the outdoors—summer sun can be shaded, and north winds can be shielded—are easier to heat and cool. When it comes to good rooms, we could go on and on.

**GOOD ARCHITECTURE IS DETERMINED BY THE QUALITY OF THE SPACES. HARMONY, USEFULNESS, AND DELIGHT ARE THE MEASURE OF QUALITY.**



PROJECT | Cabin with Loft, Sagaponack Studio

**350**  
SQUARE FEET



**275**  
SQUARE FEET

PROJECT | Four Seasons Room, Spencertown Cottage