

# Sustainability starts with smaller home

Author says bigger doesn't mean better living space

By Beth Wischmeyer

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Sustainability can come from living a "not so big" lifestyle, starting with a "not so big" home.

Speaker, author and architect Sarah Susanka, a keynote speaker for the annual Plain Green Conference and Marketplace on Friday, said a "not so big" house is about a third smaller than what people think they need. A more conservative approach to homebuying or renovating can save money as well as create a sustainable and more livable home that people enjoy living in, Susanka said.

It isn't about shoehorning people into a tiny home, but is rather using dollars available to buy or remodel a home most effectively without becoming overextended, she said.

"I've watched houses get bigger and bigger and bigger, and I realize that if everyone is building these bigger and bigger houses, what is it that they are trying to accomplish?" Susanka said. "The sense of home that everyone is looking for has nothing to do with size; it's a quality, not a quantity."

Susanka has written nine best-selling books, including "The Not So Big House," "The Not So Big Life," "Not So Big Remodeling" and, most recently, the 2010 "More Not So Big Solutions for Your Home."

The notion of a "not so big home" is focused on homes being better, not bigger, and built to last centuries rather than decades, she said.

"It's built to inspire you

every day, with every square foot of space in use every day," Susanka said. "One of the fundamental principals of the 'not so big' house is that you build the informal spaces so that they can serve formal functions as needed."

Being creative with the use of light, varying ceiling heights and adding personal details to a home can make it more inviting and livable without the need for a large home, she added. When people love their homes, the homes are better sustained.

Almost 300 people attended the annual Plain Green Conference and Marketplace held Friday during a daylong event which featured "green" exhibitors, workshops and breakout sessions.

About 100 people attended the first conference in 2008, and about 250 were at last year's conference, said Angela McKillip, one of the organizers of the event.

"This year, the goal was certainly to expand what sustainability means to a broader audience," McKillip said. "It sort of has a definition to a lot of design professionals, but it needs to have a definition to everyone."

McKillip said about half of the attendees of the conference is made up of professionals such as architects and engineers, and the other half is made up of community members and business leaders.

The Plain Green conference will be expanding into a lecture series slated to begin in mid-November.

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