

KUNI Radio Series “Unplugged”
Show #18: Not So Big House 2

From the Center for Energy & Environmental Education at the University of Northern Iowa, this is Pat Higby with a series of programs on KUNI to help you save energy.

Many people want to add energy saving features such as geothermal heat pumps or super energy efficient wall systems to their new homes or remodeling projects, but are discouraged by the cost. Even though these features will save you money in the long run, the up front cost is often too high for many budgets. The solution to this problem is to cut costs on areas you seldom use. Sarah Susanka, the architect who wrote “The Not So Big House,” explains how to successfully build a home that fits your needs **and** your budget!

Before you build or remodel, you should understand where you live now. Make a list of all the rooms in your house. Then for each room, describe the activities that take place there, and how often. List the number of times per year you entertain in your dining or living room. Don’t overlook the foyer or front door area; it could be the least used part of your home!

Having a front **and** back door is a leftover from Victorian times. We don’t have servants, and we don’t need a servants’ entrance! Susanka suggests opening two different doors into the **same** foyer, one a traditional front door, the other from the garage, by way of a mudroom. By providing decorative hooks around the foyer for the coats of guests, you can move the area of a traditional closet into the mudroom where your **family** needs storage space for coats and boots.

Combining the kitchen, dining, and family rooms into one large open area called a “great room” has recently become popular. Unfortunately many plans also include formal living and dining rooms that are **seldom used**. You need to decide which you value more, the cost of building, furnishing, heating, and cooling vacant areas or using your resources to get the features you want and your **family** will enjoy.

Bathrooms are expensive areas; the cost of a full bath can almost equal the price of a **new car**! To cut back on the number of bathrooms, consider how they can be shared. Setting apart the toilet and tub or shower with a **full** door can allow two people to use the same area, yet maintain privacy.

Before you add windows and doors to change a screened porch into a sun or all-season room, evaluate the amount of sun **other** rooms of your house receive. You may be duplicating an area you already have! Screened porches celebrate summer weather and the outdoors. Sitting in a sunroom, even when surrounded by windows, **never** gives you the impression that you are outside. Sitting on a porch, outside but protected by a roof, is **delightful**!

I’m Pat Higby, Energy Educator at the Center for Energy and Environmental Education at the University of Northern Iowa.