

ALTA VISTA

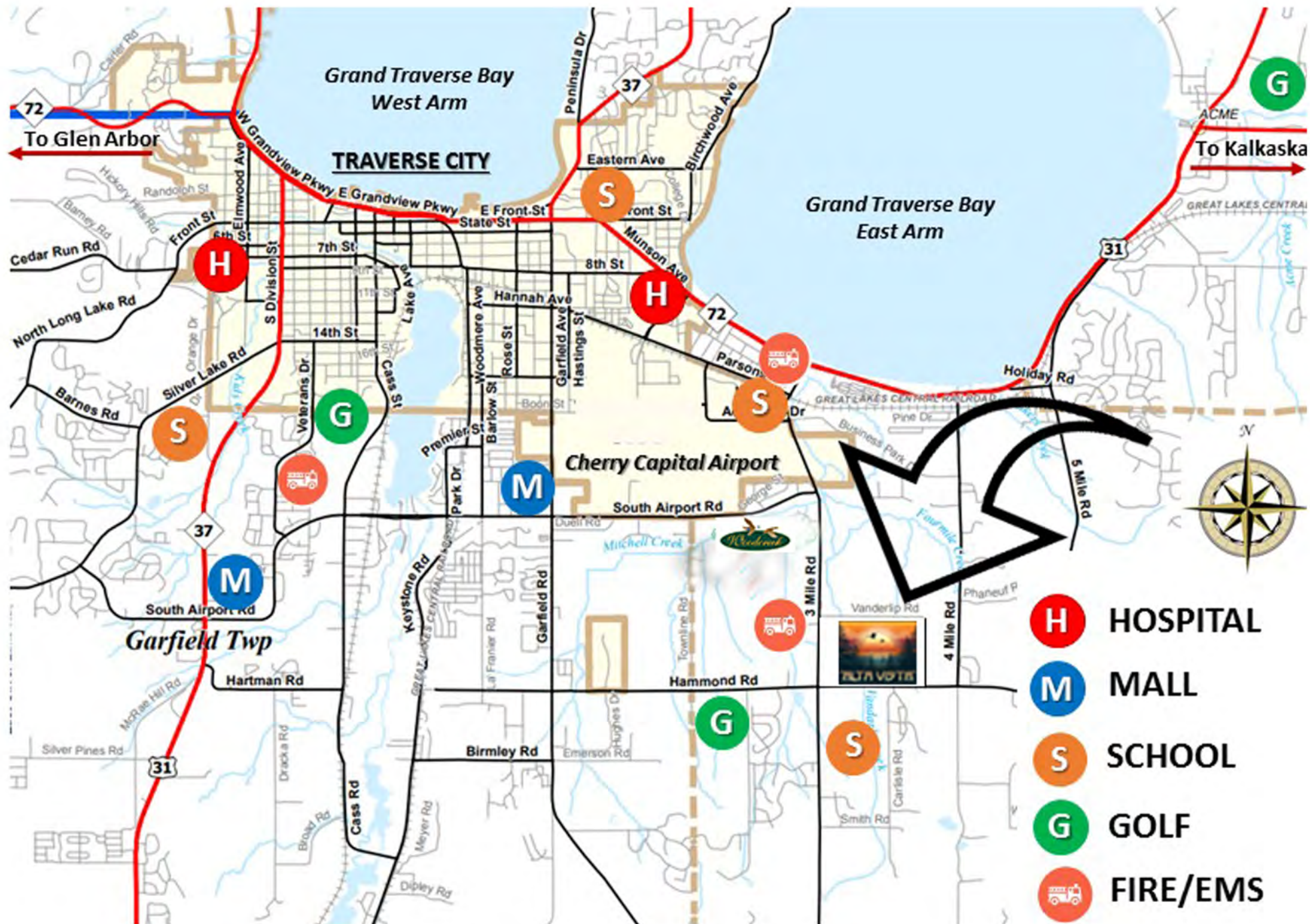
TRaverse CITY

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Small home living: not ‘downsizing’ but ‘right-sizing’

By KATHERINE ROTH January 28, 2020



With the current trend toward de-cluttering and downsizing, there are plenty of books about how to winnow down possessions to the few that are truly necessary and loved. This book shows how you can live well once that’s done.

In “Downsize: Living Large in a Small House” (2019, The Taunton Press), author Sheri Koones focuses on practical ways to live well at home once you’ve streamlined your belongings and are living more compactly.

“It scares people to think of moving into a smaller space, but every single person I interviewed who has made the transition says they are so happy they did,” Koones says. “Time and again, people used the word ‘liberated’ to describe their move to a smaller space, with homes requiring far less time and money to maintain.”

Koones, who recently relocated from a sprawling 6,800-square-foot house in Greenwich, Connecticut, to a 1,400-square-foot home closer to town, has experienced the transition herself.

“It’s not just empty nesters anymore,” she adds. “Younger people too are in couples where they’re both working, they’re having children later, they want to be active and they don’t want to be doing maintenance on the weekends. They don’t want to be tied down to mowing lawns and doing all the other chores that come with living in a big house.”

Living more sustainably and saving on energy costs is also part of the attraction of downsizing, Koones says.

So is aging in place. There are people of all ages looking for features like a master bedroom on the main floor, or barrier-free showers.

“Yes, older people with disabilities need them, but even younger people break a leg skiing, or have situations where they want a barrier-free shower,” she says.

The book features photos and illustrations of 33 well-designed small homes in urban and rural settings in the U.S. and Canada. It examines the features that make each home a success, with advice aimed at those building, renovating or even just organizing their homes.

Some of the features that Koones says can make a small home feel more spacious:

- raised ceilings, well-positioned windows and light wall colors.
- multifunctional furniture, like tiny kitchen tables that can expand to accommodate dinner guests.
- flexible rooms that can serve as office, bedroom and hobby room, for example. One house featured in the book has a garage with light fixtures and doors that open in front and back so that it doubles as an entertaining space.
- creative storage ideas, like chairs that can hang on wall pegs, hooks for bicycles, and making the best use of alcoves or space under stairs.
- fewer hallways, which allows for more livable space.

Koones details specific types of roofs (like standing-seam metal roofs), flooring (concrete) and heating systems that are more energy-efficient and low-maintenance.

“The key is to have a home that is efficiently designed, both in terms of energy use and in terms of space,” she says.

“I refer to it as ‘downsizing,’ but a better word for it might be ‘right-sizing.’ For most of history, houses were more modestly proportioned, and we lived quite comfortably in those smaller homes. Over time houses got too big. Now the trend is heading toward smaller again.”



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- Utilities for all common areas.
- Repair and maintenance for clubhouse, amenities, streets, sewer & system, landscape maintenance, snow removal in common areas
- Salaries, wages and benefits for the management staff and maintenance staff.
- Streetlights throughout entire community
- Real estate taxes on the grounds and clubhouse.
- Insurance
- Variety of community events

Homeowners are responsible for the usual expenses of home ownership:

- Gas, electric, cable, telephone, garbage pickup.
- Home & yard maintenance
- Snow removal on porches, decks, sidewalks and driveway.
- Homeowners Insurance

Alta Vista does have a variety of services available to our homeowners to make their Alta Vista experience as carefree as possible. This can be as simple as hanging a picture or changing a light bulb to relighting your hot water tank or furnace. The more complex services you may want to consider include snow removal, planting a tree, cutting your grass, home interior and exterior repairs.

Alta Vista also has a snowbird package: When you leave in the fall, we will winterize your home. This includes winterizing your plumbing and water supply lines, disconnecting some services and then securing your home. Call us before you leave to return in the Spring and we will air out your house, reconnect all the utilities, test the hot water heater, furnace and air-conditioning and deodorize if necessary.

All it takes is one phone call to the management office. You don't need to own a ladder, screwdriver, wrench, snow shovel or lawn mower.