

COMMENTARY

Transitioning to the next phase of living

Knowing when it's time to move yourself or a loved one to a smaller or more accessible home, or even an assisted living center, can be tough. There are some signs that can help aid you in identifying when the time is right.

Factors such as age, health and living situation can be signals that it's time to look for other living arrangements. For example, if your parents are over 70 years old and their house is more than 20 years old, there's a good chance they struggle every day just to maintain their home.

For 81-year-old Ned Kraft, he knew the time was right to consider living elsewhere after suffering a broken leg in a fall. Living in a two-story home with his wife was no longer an option and Kraft felt an urgent need to move into something smaller and without stairs to be able to manage his family's lifestyle and overall well-being. With simple upkeep and maintenance becoming difficult and close relatives and grandchildren nearby, living in a safer home environment became the top priority.

If you or a family member end up needing to sell your house quickly and get into a more suitable living situation, here are a few steps to help with transitioning:

Determine how much space you truly need: Maybe that two-story, four-bedroom home with a spacious backyard you bought when the kids were little is more than you need now. Smaller homes and apartments are easier to maintain, and taking into account your lifestyle can help determine what to look for in your next home.

If you're home a majority of the day or expect to have gatherings and guests often, you may want something a bit bigger. If your health is a concern or you'd rather not have to worry about tasks such as yard work or snow removal, something smaller or without stairs — such as a first-floor apartment, may be more your speed.

Sell your current home: Working with professional home buyers, such as HomeVestors, the largest home buyer in the U.S. with more than 60,000 houses bought since 1996, can get you cash quickly while also taking care of closing costs and needed repairs without the burden of showing your home to potential buyers. This would save time and money for the seller, and help one move sooner than later into their new living environment.

"I just wanted to sell it as quick as I could and move right away," Kraft said. "I liked the idea of HomeVestors giving me a fair price for the house and then taking over the overwhelming amount of responsibilities so I didn't have to worry about cleaning it or fixing it up."

Take it or leave it: Taking inventory of everything that's been accumulated over decades and deciding what to keep, what to pass down, what to put in storage and what to sell, donate or throw away can be tough.

Once you've determined what to do with all of those possessions, the professionals at HomeVestors can aid in the transition by discarding the things you no longer need or want after you move. Simply leave behind unwanted items and HomeVestors will do the rest.

For information on how to make a smoother living transition, visit homevestors.com.

SOURCE: Family Features

KEYS HOMES & REAL ESTATE



10 billion microbes disappear
— See Page 8D

FENG SHUI TRINITY



Photos by MIKE HENTZ/The Citizen

In small kitchens, lighting is critical and mirrors are friends; indeed, they are complementary items of feng shui.

Homes can be designed with principles of healing energy

BY BARBARA BOWERS
Citizen Columnist

Mary Kay Cottrill says she didn't believe in feng shui until a few years back, when "I was sick and my dog was bitten by another dog."

Cottrill, a third-generation Chinese American who's lived in Key West for more than a decade, decided to apply the ancient Chinese art of placement to the problem: "I put a plant in a corner to absorb the bad chi," she said. "I healed, my dog healed but that plant struggled."

The art of feng shui is rooted in a holistic world view, where everything is part of a natural order. From plants and animals to people and houses, the universal environment is alive and ever-changing. But because feng shui reduces this vastness into more manageable units like personal surroundings, even your home can be designed with the same principles of energy that rule planets and galaxies in space.

Feng shui practitioners' figure a house's chi, or its vital essence, is rarely perfect unless built from scratch, and on this dead-end island loaded with more wooden antique houses than any other historic district in the United States, these days few are built from scratch. Nevertheless, renovations, remakes and repurposes can incorporate feng shui principles, especially at the front door, where good energy enters a house and is as important as the good airflow these old houses were designed to accommodate.

According to the know-fengshui.com website, "an unobstructed, open flow of energy to the front door is primary. This means no recycling bins, cracked pots with dead plants or any other items block the flow of energy to your door."

Next, the door must be well-kept — no squeaks, no chipped paint — and its color must harmonize with the feng shui element of the door direction. For example, if your front door faces north then paint it white or grey; avoid reds, blues or black.

Harnessing the best energy through feng shui can be a lifelong-learning process, and if you're so inclined, read up on its elements, kua numbers, directions, colors and more. I'm skipping all this relevant info and going directly to the trinity of feng shui, the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, which are rooms related specifically to your health and well-being.

Because good feng shui decorating guides the chi harmoniously by proper



Natural light is considered medicine for your body, but be bright only by day; by night, as dark as possible.



Having a bed under a window is the worst possible bedroom layout, but the problem has possible solutions.

See **FENG SHUI**, Page 2D

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Feng shui

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arrangement of various items in the room, feng shui wise, the main feature of a good bedroom is the positioning of the bed: Always place it in the strongest and most protected area of the room; preferably against a solid wall. A bed against a wall between the door and the window, though, interferes with the direct line of energy and should be avoided, if possible. Worse yet, is a bed under a window, or a bed that aligns directly with the bedroom door — in this scenario, feet-to-door placement is known as the coffin.

Of course, when you don't have choices away from windows or doors, bad chi can be absorbed with heavy bedroom curtains and/or a tall headboard placed in front of the window(s); decorative items used to mitigate negative energy akin to Cottrill's plant placement.

By now you get the feng shui way goes beyond the material comfort level of surroundings; it encompasses relationships, worldly success and physical and mental health, as well. What's more, in most old cultures, the kitchen is considered the heart of the home, and Chinese wisdom adds that the kitchen reflects your state of health. Especially important is the triangular placement of oven, fridge and sink—a kitchen trinity of sorts—which also makes sense of efficient movement when cooking.

Best feng shui kitchen-floor plans are away from the front door; the worst is front entry into the kitchen. The devil is in the detail, though, because entry into a great room with a kitchen — today's sweetheart of open-floor plans — is OK if the kitchen island impedes



MIKE HENTZ/The Citizen

A strong, tall headboard and window covering at night can alter the feng shui energy and create a positive outcome.

visibility of the oven from the front door. Indeed, ovens in line with front doors are considered very bad feng shui, and then as any card-playing cowboy knows, when your back is to the front door, evil happens: Clearly, avoid positioning ovens that position cooks' backs to the door. When this is not possible, feng shui consultants recommend a mirror behind the stove to allow vigilance while working.

Doors and ovens are big deals in the art of feng shui so never allow an oven to face the bathroom door, and redesign your entire household when the bathroom door faces the front door.

Don't have \$75K this week for a bathroom remake? Then apply

these two basic bathroom tips to bring balance, comfort and harmony inside your home: Stop good energy from going down the drain by creating a focal point on the wall nearest the bathroom door — a painting, a lamp, or maybe a mirror to reflect the bad chi.

And by all means, keep the bathroom door closed at all times.

Barbara Bowers is a Key West Realtor and host of a radio talk show about owning and maintaining property in the Florida Keys. To suggest a home to be featured in the Keys Homes section, send an email to barbara@bbowers.com. Homes listed for sale may not be considered.

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Student lives in 96-square-foot house

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

POULTNEY, Vt. — A college student in Vermont is living in a 96-square-foot house he built to reduce his carbon footprint — and save money.

The Rutland Herald reports that Green Mountain College senior Rob Dunn has been living in the two-story Poultny home since August 2014.

The home is powered by two 100-watt solar panels. A rocket mass heater built from a cast-iron stove insulated with a mixture of clay, sand and straw allows for cooking and heating.

The home cost Dunn about \$3,000 to build, and the landowner is letting him live rent-free. He says that will help with the high cost of college.

The Henniker, New Hampshire, native says living in the home is the “most raw experience that I’ve ever had.”



Associated Press photo

Rob Dunn sits on on a couch in his two-story, 96-square-foot home in Poultny, Vermont. Dunn, a Green Mountain College senior from Henniker, New Hampshire, said he spent \$3,000 to build the house.



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