

# HOMES

## & GARDENING

Twin Cities architects will share today's smart design strategies at "Your Home, Your Way" event.



# CREATING YOUR JUST-RIGHT HOME

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Maybe you just can't stand cooking in that closed-off, cramped kitchen one more day. Or your kids' shoes, backpacks and baseball gloves are spread all over the house. And light-filled rooms with big windows would really lift your spirits.

Let's face it — you're ready to reinvent your older home or build a new one. But where do you start?

Architects are expert problem-solvers who can open up and reconfigure existing spaces for a smooth-flowing floor plan — or design your dream home from the ground up.

On April 17, a panel of local architects, along with homeowners who recently made their dream homes come true, will share insights and take questions at "Your Home, Your Way," an architecture and design event presented by AIA Minnesota and the Star Tribune. You'll also get a sneak peek at the Home of the Month projects selected to appear in the Star Tribune over the next year.

We asked architects on the panel to weigh in on ways to keep down remodeling costs, what's timeless, not trendy, and the future of home design.



**Tim Alt**  
Altus Architecture + Design  
• altusarch.com

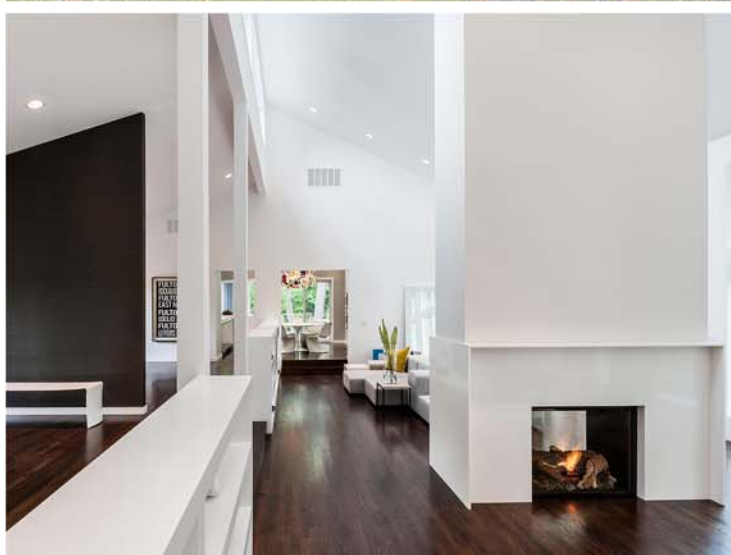
**Timeless not trendy:** Build with materials or products that will stand the test of time, like stone, wood and metal. We try to leverage our knowledge, creativity and sourcing to do unique features that are affordable, like a Corten steel stair screen with a digital-cut pattern.

**Less is more:** I encourage living in less space — it feels more homey and cozy, and pushes us to explore flexible rooms. Make sure there's enough natural light, which is like spiritual food, making rooms live and feel better.

**Will it look dated in 10 years?** Scraped wood floors looked super-cool 10 years ago but now look like a slice of the 1970s. Materials that are trying to look like other materials — like ceramics mimicking stone and wood — it's just silly.

**Worth-it green features:** It's hard to justify the upfront costs of a geothermal system when the cycle of payback is long-term. We use the passive house method of building with higher insulation value and high-quality windows that minimize energy use and offset heating costs. Look for products that reduce water usage and energy-saving LED lighting systems.

**Stretch remodeling dollars:** Instead of a costly addition, we open up existing spaces by knocking down walls, which makes the home feel bigger. To save money, clients can find their own lighting, cabinetry and hardware, order it on the internet, get free shipping and have it in a week.



Photos by PAUL CROSBY

An industrial modern home, top, for a big family has open and multi-functional spaces of indestructible materials; glass house, middle, is clad in black metal; total house remodel, above, of a dated 1980s contemporary rambler, by Tim Alt, Altus Architecture + Design.

**The Alt abode:** My perfect home would be smaller, open to the outdoors and made of materials we've been using for the past 100 years. Then throw in what new technology allows me to be creative.

**Bring the outdoors in:** Install windows that stretch all the way down to the floor line — it dissolves the barrier between inside and outside. Expanses of glass allow smaller spaces to live larger and invite you to go outside.

**What's new in home design?:** There's a large movement of living in compact, flexible spaces — people recognize that the quality of living is not based on quantity of space. Most of our clients want to build 3,000 square feet or less, and many empty nesters want to simplify.

**Hub of the home:** The kitchen is the dynamic part of the house. It's no longer outrageous to have an 8-foot-long island with a baking and homework station, pullout storage drawers and stools set at each person's height.

**Hidden challenges:** Removing and replacing old infrastructure, such as plumbing and electrical, can be complex. When you start pulling back the layers, there can be hidden costs. Hire a trustworthy contractor for an assessment before opening up walls.

**Hire an architect because ...** We're like a translator between the homeowners and the contractor. We are an advocate for you and help weed through the nonsense, focusing on what's important to you from a financial and design standpoint.