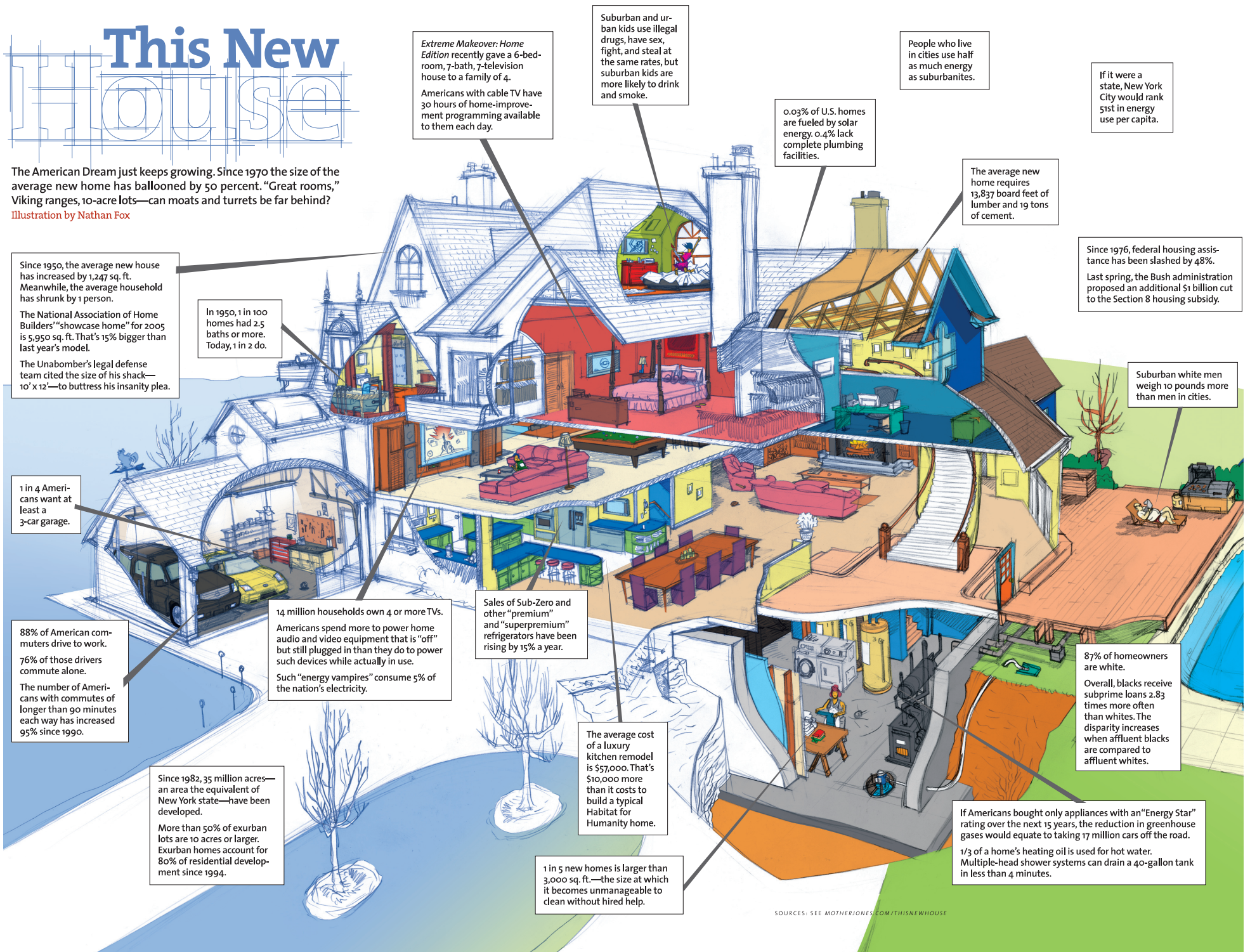


This New House

The American Dream just keeps growing. Since 1970 the size of the average new home has ballooned by 50 percent. "Great rooms," Viking ranges, 10-acre lots—can moats and turrets be far behind?
 Illustration by Nathan Fox



Extreme Makeover: Home Edition recently gave a 6-bedroom, 7-bath, 7-television house to a family of 4. Americans with cable TV have 30 hours of home-improvement programming available to them each day.

Suburban and urban kids use illegal drugs, have sex, fight, and steal at the same rates, but suburban kids are more likely to drink and smoke.

People who live in cities use half as much energy as suburbanites.

If it were a state, New York City would rank 51st in energy use per capita.

0.03% of U.S. homes are fueled by solar energy. 0.4% lack complete plumbing facilities.

The average new home requires 13,837 board feet of lumber and 19 tons of cement.

Since 1976, federal housing assistance has been slashed by 48%. Last spring, the Bush administration proposed an additional \$1 billion cut to the Section 8 housing subsidy.

Since 1950, the average new house has increased by 1,247 sq. ft. Meanwhile, the average household has shrunk by 1 person. The National Association of Home Builders' "showcase home" for 2005 is 5,950 sq. ft. That's 15% bigger than last year's model. The Unabomber's legal defense team cited the size of his shack—10' x 12'—to buttress his insanity plea.

In 1950, 1 in 100 homes had 2.5 baths or more. Today, 1 in 2 do.

Suburban white men weigh 10 pounds more than men in cities.

1 in 4 Americans want at least a 3-car garage.

88% of American commuters drive to work. 76% of those drivers commute alone. The number of Americans with commutes of longer than 90 minutes each way has increased 95% since 1990.

14 million households own 4 or more TVs. Americans spend more to power home audio and video equipment that is "off" but still plugged in than they do to power such devices while actually in use. Such "energy vampires" consume 5% of the nation's electricity.

Sales of Sub-Zero and other "premium" and "superpremium" refrigerators have been rising by 15% a year.

87% of homeowners are white. Overall, blacks receive subprime loans 2.83 times more often than whites. The disparity increases when affluent blacks are compared to affluent whites.

The average cost of a luxury kitchen remodel is \$57,000. That's \$10,000 more than it costs to build a typical Habitat for Humanity home.

If Americans bought only appliances with an "Energy Star" rating over the next 15 years, the reduction in greenhouse gases would equate to taking 17 million cars off the road. 1/3 of a home's heating oil is used for hot water. Multiple-head shower systems can drain a 40-gallon tank in less than 4 minutes.

Since 1982, 35 million acres—an area the equivalent of New York state—have been developed. More than 50% of exurban lots are 10 acres or larger. Exurban homes account for 80% of residential development since 1994.

1 in 5 new homes is larger than 3,000 sq. ft.—the size at which it becomes unmanageable to clean without hired help.

SOURCES: SEE MOTHERJONES.COM/THISNEHOUSE

LONELY PLANET

According to a recent 'Mother Jones' magazine spread, the average American feels that he or she needs a three-car garage, resulting in homes so large they seemingly orbit in their own universe.