

# SHOME **SWEET HOME**

From man caves to she sheds, the quest to cohabit and share space comfortably continues to manifest into new housing trends. The latest hybrid in his-and-her turf sharing is the shome, or shouse, which is a combined shop and home structure all under one roof.

Part industrial steel building, part modern loft-style living, couples are learning the power of compromise in this uniquely Wyoming design.



# MODERN HOMESTEAD

Shawn McKim admits he got pretty lucky when it comes to picking a wife. Along with sharing his passion for outdoors and hunting, his wife Cassidy also got behind his idea of building a shome – or shop/home. In fact, she not only designed the interior space herself using an ink pen and graph paper, but she’s also gotten her hands plenty dirty helping to build it.

“She’s the little engine that could,” Shawn said of his wife, who was trying to diffuse a temper tantrum from their youngest son, 2-year-old Atlas, who was face down on the concrete floor as his older brother Syllis spun circles around him on a tiny, red scooter.

Cassidy smiled as she peeled her youngest from the floor and handed him a snack, then cautioned Syllis to slow down.



“Once the wood floors go in, there will be no more in-house riding,” Cassidy said. But for now, with the unpainted walls and big, empty rooms, it makes for a perfect playground.

For the kids anyway.

The adults have been busy working.

After ordering a shop kit online, the McKims, along with family and friends, erected the steel post-frame building all on their own without the cost of hiring a contractor.

From the outside, the McKim’s large, gray rectangular shome looks a lot like somewhere you’d take your car for a tune-up or to get a tire changed.

Inside, however, the cement floors, large open floor concept and towering cross beam ceilings look more like a fancy loft in a big, urban city. Were it not for the miles of snow-covered flat prairie visible through the many windows, one might forget they were south of town, off Highway 50, in rural Campbell County, on land homesteaded in 1912 by Shawn’s great-great grandfather.

Little nods of history can be found in the open rooms, like the barnwood mantle over the fireplace and the large cast-iron pellet stove.

Preserving family history is important to Shawn, who last year purchased five acres of land from his dad, who also has a house on the original homestead, along with his brother.

“It’s the McKim compound,” Shawn joked, explaining that it had always been the goal to return to the country after a few years of suburban living in downtown Gillette.

Also paramount to the dream was building their own place, ground up, as a family.

After nearly a year of work, a lot of sweat equity has gone into the project, including bits and pieces from the couple’s three children, whose handiwork is currently visible in the form of gray dabs of paint on one wall that Shawn comments looks pretty cool, like Chinese characters. Apart from their art contributions, the kids are good hands, according to Cassidy, and love to help their parents with the light lifting and carrying chores.

As a stay-at-home mom, Cassidy and the boys spend a lot of time tinkering with various odds and ends in their half-built home, which, despite the big rooms and cold floors, feels surprisingly cozy.

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Originally, they had planned to divide the space in equal halves, but once Cassidy began designing, the shop quickly shrank from 60-40 down to a 70-30 split, with roughly 1,600 sq. ft. of shop and 3,000 sq. ft. of living space.

This versatility is what the McKims like best about their shome design, which unlike traditional stick homes, can be configured any way they like — given the lack of load bearing walls that can be erected anywhere. They've divided the large space into four bedrooms with a Jack and Jill bathroom between the kids' rooms and their own massive master bath complete with a separate "throne" room.

For her "she" section of the house, Cassidy has carved out a design studio where she plans to one day restore furniture and do other art projects, once the little ones join their big sister at school.

Already a year into the project, Shawn



guesses it will take another couple weeks to finish, though Cassidy is less optimistic.

Between Shawn's full-time job, along with her full-time mothering duties, there are only so many hours in the day with which to work.

The tradeoff for progress, however, is well worth it to the couple who like the fact that everyone has had a hand in helping to build the family's home.

Mainly, Shawn is happy to finally get his shome, which he has been eyeing since high school when the 31-year-old dad first thought about building his own home. Having acreage is a big part of the appeal. Outside, he envisions a motocross track for the boys and maybe room for a horse or two.

As far as Cassidy is concerned, being able to design the space around her family has been a huge part of the creative process that she enjoys.

Best yet about the shome is its price tag, which Shawn estimates costs \$50 per sq. ft. versus \$114-120 per for a stick-built.

Another advantage is the low cost of maintenance for the steel roofs and walls, which are far more durable than traditional siding and shingles, particularly when it comes to Wyoming hail and snow storms.

This is a big part of what makes these properties so popular among Wyomingites, according to WYCam Construction owner Shane Robinson, who has built several of these structures in the area.



## Anderson SHOME

Well ahead of the trend, Scott Anderson and his family built their shome nearly a decade ago. At 48 x 80 x 18' tall, their shome is divided into 30 x 34' for two stories of living space with about 2,000 sq. ft. devoted to their three-door large shop. Along with in-floor heat throughout, as well as a wheat pump that serves as air conditioner in the summer months, their shome sits on 10 acres just across the South Dakota border.



Pricewise, it cost about \$385,000 to build, but it's the family's dream home with many bells and whistles to boot.

Apart from the straight staircase in the shop that goes up to the top floor, there's also a spiral staircase in the living room leading up to the two bedrooms and bath on the upper floor. Downstairs is another bedroom and bath and a large, tiled living room and kitchen.

The design works perfectly for their family, as Scott's interests revolve around heavy equipment and sports car racing, while his wife prefers to refinish old furniture.

"The 2,800 sq. ft. of shop space is very versatile (and warm in winter) for all of our projects," Scott said, "and the space works perfectly."



He estimates he gets about three requests a week from customers interested in owning a shome, which along with its cheaper price tag, especially seems to appeal to people building homes in Wyoming.

"They are incredibly versatile," Robinson said, explaining the virtues of the structure's unique features, like cement floors that can be custom treated in interesting ways – like acid etching, stamped or colored – as well as the vaulted, oversized ceilings.

Where men, like the recently divorced bachelor who requested a shome, so he could finally have a shop and bachelor pad in one, seem to like the functionality of having a shop to tinker in at their home, women seem to like the ability to custom design a home to the specifications of the family.

Along with features like radiant heating, low-cost maintenance and a large selection of colors and siding options, people can also design a shome that looks a lot like a traditional house, complete with partial or wraparound porches and other overhang features.

Shome kits can be purchased from a variety of dealers, and his company uses Lester Buildings

out of Minnesota that also allows contractors to design a shome with software, so people can customize size, pitch of the roof, and any other number of design options.

The only caveat is that in Campbell County, shomes can only be built in rural residential or commercial zones and cannot be built within residential zones where attached shops cannot exceed the size of the home itself.

That's why you see a lot more shomes out in the county, he noted, where people have a lot more freedom to build.

Regardless, it's becoming increasingly popular as more couples and families find ways to peacefully split the space in their home to cater to one another's interests.

For the McKims, it's the perfect solution, and a lot like the pioneering days, when families and neighbors got together to help build each other's homes. In a sense, Shawn feels like he's continuing on the family tradition by pioneering his own corner of the homestead with his home.

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