



Planned to Perfection

Not sure if you've short-changed your log home's square footage? In danger of over-designing? Keeping these key floor plan considerations in mind will result in a home as welcoming as a bear hug. BY THE EDITORS

Fairy tales aren't just for kids; they're full of wisdom for grown-ups as well. Case in point, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. In the course of invading the Bear-family homestead, Goldilocks is in search of a comfortable place to sit, a good meal and a pillow on which to lie her weary head. But in this quest, she encounters some obstacles—a chair that's too soft, a bowl of porridge that's too cold and a bed that's too big. Fortunately, after a series of trial and error, she finds

solutions that are “just right” and makes herself at home. That is, until the bears come back.

Many folks who are reviewing floor plans or designing their log homes from scratch face similar challenges, particularly when it comes to size. But unlike our flaxen-haired heroine, we don't have the luxury of a do-over if we don't get it right the first time—at least not without considerable (and unnecessary) expense.

So how do you establish the amount of space you'll need? The first step is to consider how many people will occupy the house the majority of the time. For a couple of retirees, that number likely will be two. If it's a young family's full-time residence, it could be four to six. Or, if you're hoping your log home will act as the “place to be” for family reunions and extended vacations (or you have an exceptionally large brood), you'll serve yourself well to design a house fit for eight or more. We've asked three log home design experts to share their insight about how to create a home that's the perfect size, so you write your own “happily ever after.”



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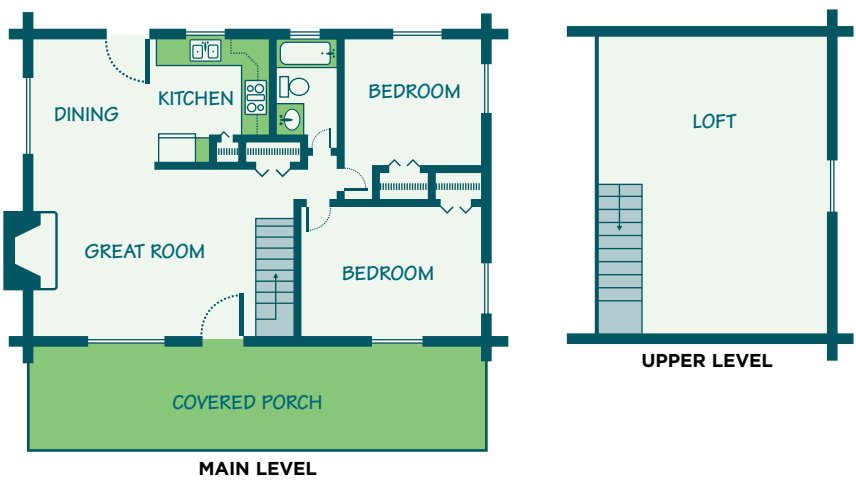
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A House for Two

Depending on lifestyle, a couple could live comfortably in a home that's 1,000 square feet or 10,000 square feet, says Brian Delwiche, design manager at Wisconsin Log Homes. There are a lot of factors at play, including budget. But for a modestly sized, two-person abode, there are design elements that are absolutely necessary, as well as a few tricks to make the house feel more spacious than it's square footage would suggest. Try these tips on for size:

- Though there's no "minimum" amount of square footage a two-person house should have, open living space is essential in designs on a smaller scale. In addition to reducing the number of interior walls and hallways, you can achieve this through strategic window placement and ceiling heights. —*Brian Delwiche*
- In a small home, there's a tendency to try to fit too much in. Layouts should make the best use of your square footage while keeping the basics intact. You want the great room to be comfortable. You don't want the master bedroom to be too small. You may not need a large kitchen. Sometimes proportions can get odd and be detrimental to other parts of the house. —*David Creasman, architectural department manger, Strongwood Log Home Company*
- Kitchens should be planned according to the owners' cooking and eating preferences. If you entertain, then a spacious formal dining room might be something to consider—even in a small home. But if you're a casual couple who rarely sits at the table together, a breakfast bar or dinette might work best for your lifestyle. In short, don't include space you won't use. —*Brian Delwiche*
- A laundry room is essential in a full-time home, but that's not



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Wide-open floor plans contained within a small footprint, such as this 1,257-square-foot home, can give the illusion of having much larger spaces than they actually do.

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MAIN LEVEL

Crystal Lodge

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A first-floor master suite makes sense in a home designed for two, especially if you plan to retire in it. Here, the master encompasses half of the main level.

necessarily the case if it's a vacation home. Evaluate your needs and factor in the extra costs for plumbing, appliances, etc. —*David Creasman*

- In smaller houses, where space is at a premium, the number of bedrooms and baths should reflect the number of occupants, but that doesn't mean they have to be small. A couple who prefers to spend most of their time at home may opt for a large master suite to accommodate their lifestyle, whereas a couple on the go may lean toward a small-yet-efficient bedroom, allowing for more space in the main areas.

—*Mike Turley, structural design and engineering manager, Rocky Mountain Log Homes*

- You can never have enough storage. In a two-person home, you'll want a closet for each bedroom and at least two general-storage closets. If the home has a second floor, try and utilize the low space beneath the eaves. —*David Creasman*

Family of Four (or a few more)

In the opinion of David Creasman, Strongwood Log Home Company's architectural department manager, those looking to accommodate four to six people will want to avoid compartmentalized designs. "There are some 2,000-square-foot homes that are far more livable than houses that are 5,000 to 7,000 square feet, because the smaller home makes the most of an open floor plan," he says. Here are a few other considerations to keep in mind as you're drafting a home to suit a small group:

■ I always remind a young family who's planning on living in the home for a long period of time to make decisions for today *and* the future. The kids might be young now, but it won't be long until their grown, and all of you will need your own space. Design your home for the stages of life that are to come, including a first-floor master suite (or a space that can be converted into one), for the distant future. —*Brian Delwiche*

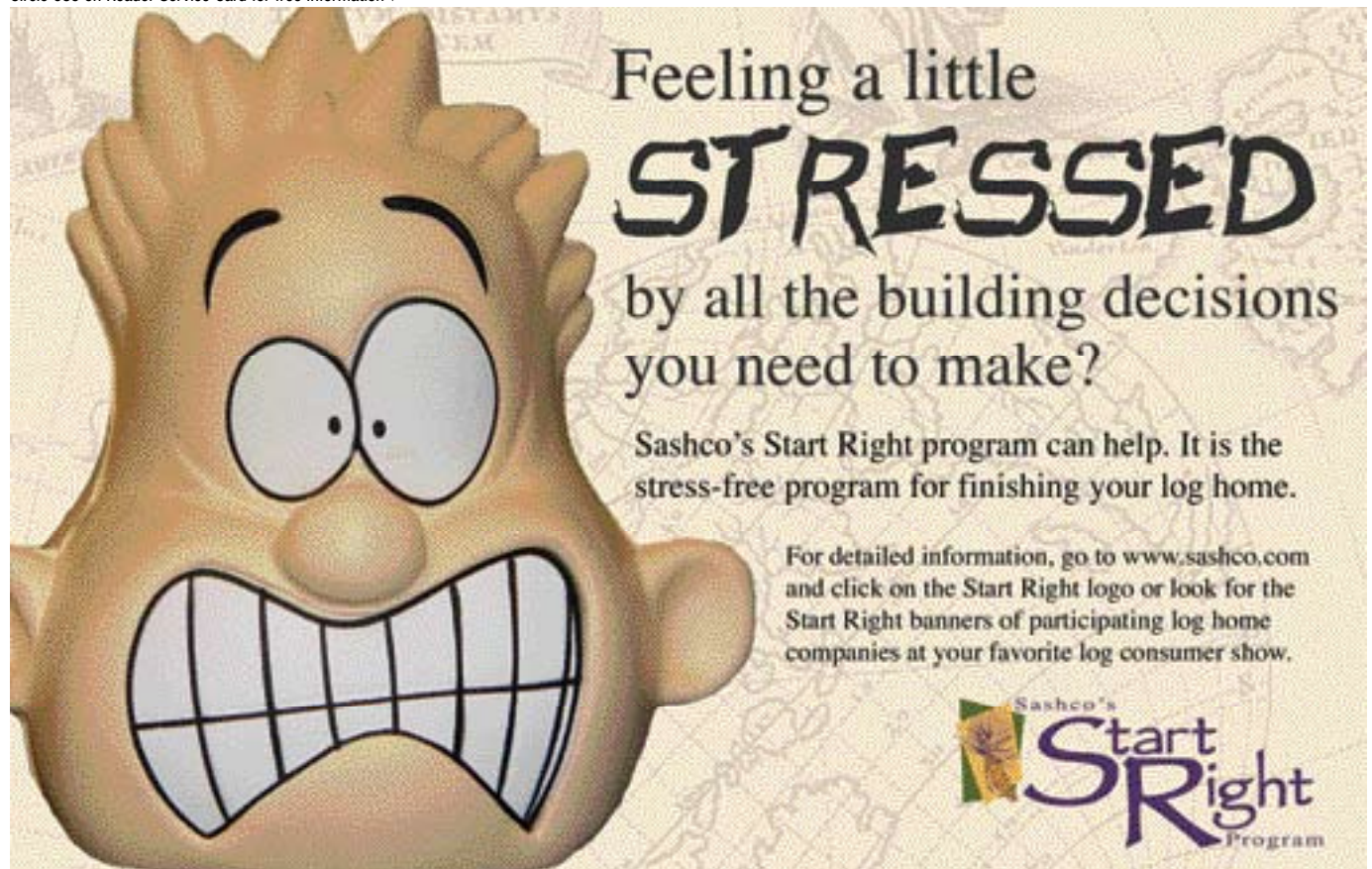
■ I feel that in a four-person home, 2,000 square feet is the minimum you should consider. If you go smaller, you run the risk of the rooms feeling too cramped. —*David Creasman*

■ To some extent, the size of the main living areas should increase based on family numbers, but to function well for four to six occupants, it's more important that the spaces flow seamlessly to

accommodate group activities or entertaining. The size of a room is secondary to the function of it. —*Mike Turley*

■ The lifestyle of a medium-sized family will dictate the layout and the amenities to make the home comfortable and functional. Common upgrades include a well-planned laundry area and multiple baths (located near each bedroom) that are tailored to meet the needs of each individual resident. Storage is always a consideration in multiple-occupant homes. Some active families require a lot of storage for sports or hobby equipment, whereas others—especially those who visit the house only a handful of times each year—don't. —*Brian Delwiche*


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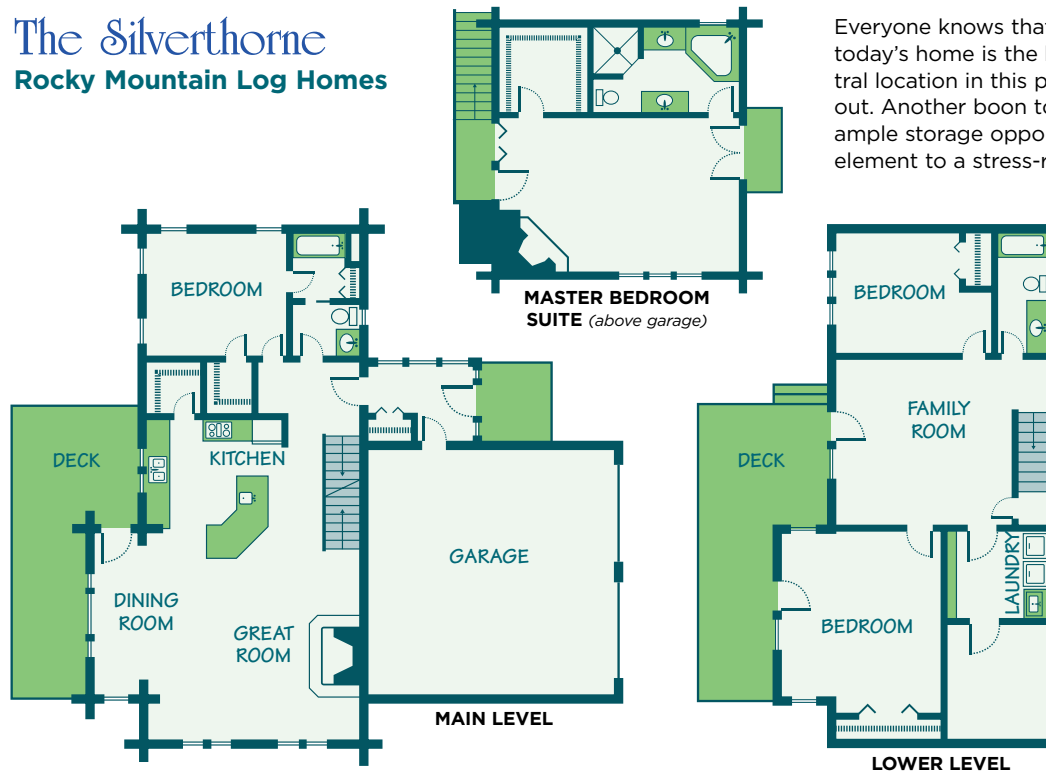
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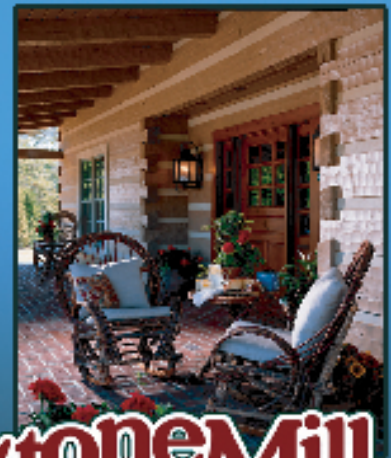
Everyone knows that the the heart of today's home is the kitchen, and its central location in this plan is well thought out. Another boon to this design is the ample storage opportunities—a key element to a stress-reducing home.

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Welcome back to the Simple Life

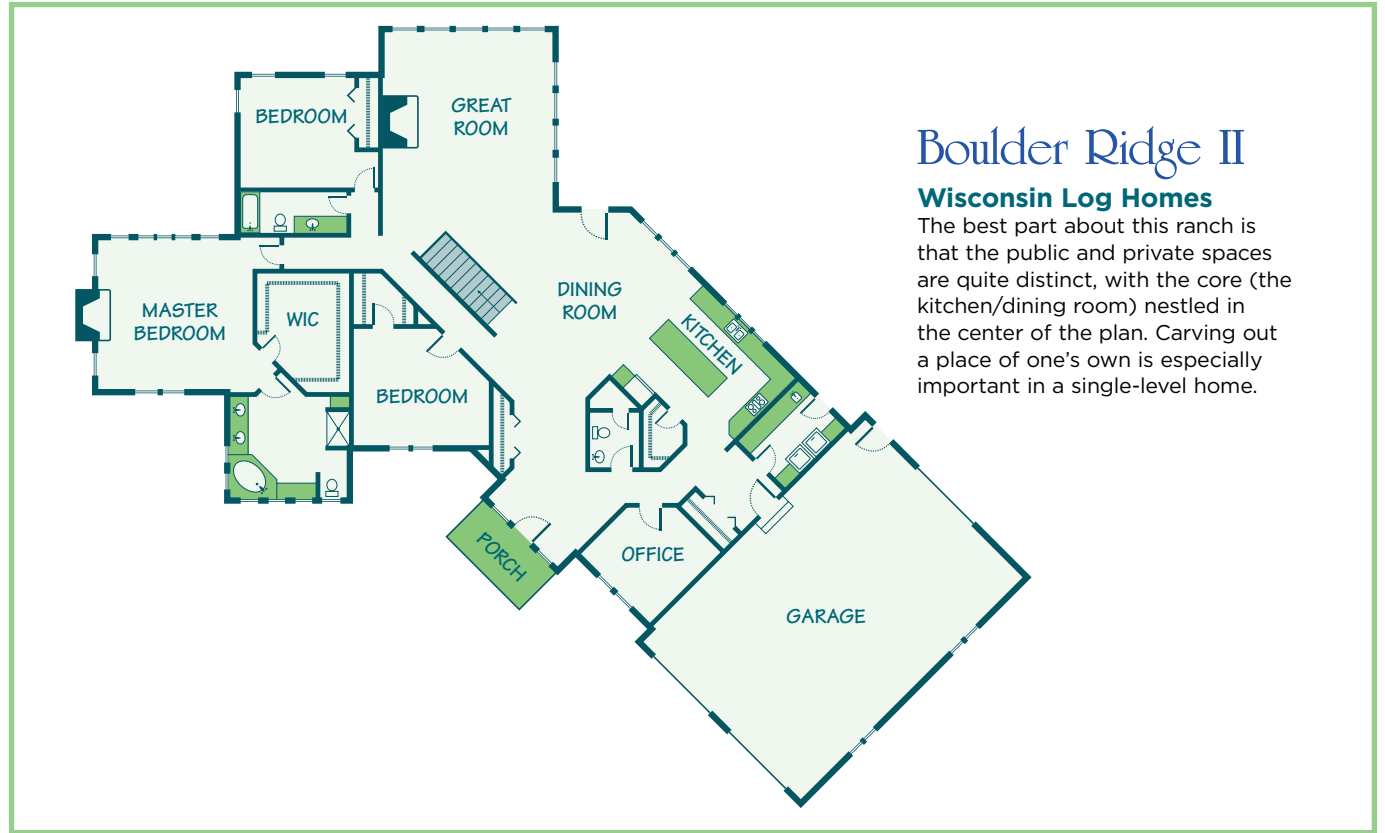
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Boulder Ridge II

Wisconsin Log Homes

The best part about this ranch is that the public and private spaces are quite distinct, with the core (the kitchen/dining room) nestled in the center of the plan. Carving out a place of one's own is especially important in a single-level home.

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■ Clutter can be very stressful and inadequate storage is usually the culprit. A favorite feature in this design is the “drop spot” at the rear entry. It’s a great place to toss mail, jackets, cell phones, umbrellas—all the items that typically get plopped onto the kitchen counter. Now they can be deposited near the garage entry and kept out of sight if and when unexpected visitors arrive. —Mike Turley

■ It may feel like a luxury, but you may want to consider a second laundry area, perhaps with a small, stacked washer/dryer unit—especially if you’ll be hosting extended overnight guests frequently. Place one near the master suite and one in a more communal spot to provide a second, private place to handle the wash. —David Creasman

■ Planning spaces around the activities that will take place in them is a must. Shared areas need to be designed knowing that each and every person in the home will frequent the space—perhaps several times a day. The kitchen, for example, isn’t only the place where the family will cook and eat, it’s a place to talk about daily events and should be conducive for that. A private space like a bedroom, on the other hand, can be designed around an individual’s preferences. —Mike Turley

■ When it comes to bathrooms, you need at least 2 1/2 to three. A Jack-and-Jill bathroom (that is, a single bathroom that bridges two separate bedrooms) is a perfect solution to boost functionality and reduce costs. A separate water closet improves privacy. —David Creasman



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Eight Is Enough (or is it?)

Obviously, a house for eight or more will require large living spaces to allow for numerous individuals to occupy those spaces simultaneously—and the kitchen and great room are central to this concept, according to Rocky Mountain Log Home's structural design and engineering manager, Mike Turley. But in a house large enough to accommodate this kind of crowd, it's also vital to carve out some personal space for you, too. Here's how to achieve both:

- One of the basics that many people don't think about is to create more spacious walkways, entryways and foyers. With this many people coming in and out, you need to design enough elbow-room for everyone to feel comfortable. Avoid small rooms and long, narrow spaces altogether. Often, that doesn't mean increasing the total square footage as much as finding a better way to design the floor plan. —*David Creasman*
- A spacious first-floor master suite is the epitome of personal pampering and privacy. But in a home large enough to sleep eight, you may want to consider a second master suite as well. Common areas should be designed for luxurious entertaining but should still contain spaces that are comfortable for two. —*Brian Delwiche*
- If you have the desire and budget for a large-scale house, consider adding some truly unique amenities, like an exercise room or a library/sitting area. Having these kinds of private spaces will give you quiet refuge from the masses. —*Mike Turley*
- If the home will be owned and occupied by more than one family (i.e., a vacation retreat) it's crucial to discuss lifestyle requirements and personal taste with all parties involved during the early phases of the design process. Clear communication reduces costly changes while ensuring each member's wishes are incorporated into the plan. —*Brian Delwiche*
- A dedicated dining room isn't necessary in every home, but when you're talking eight or more

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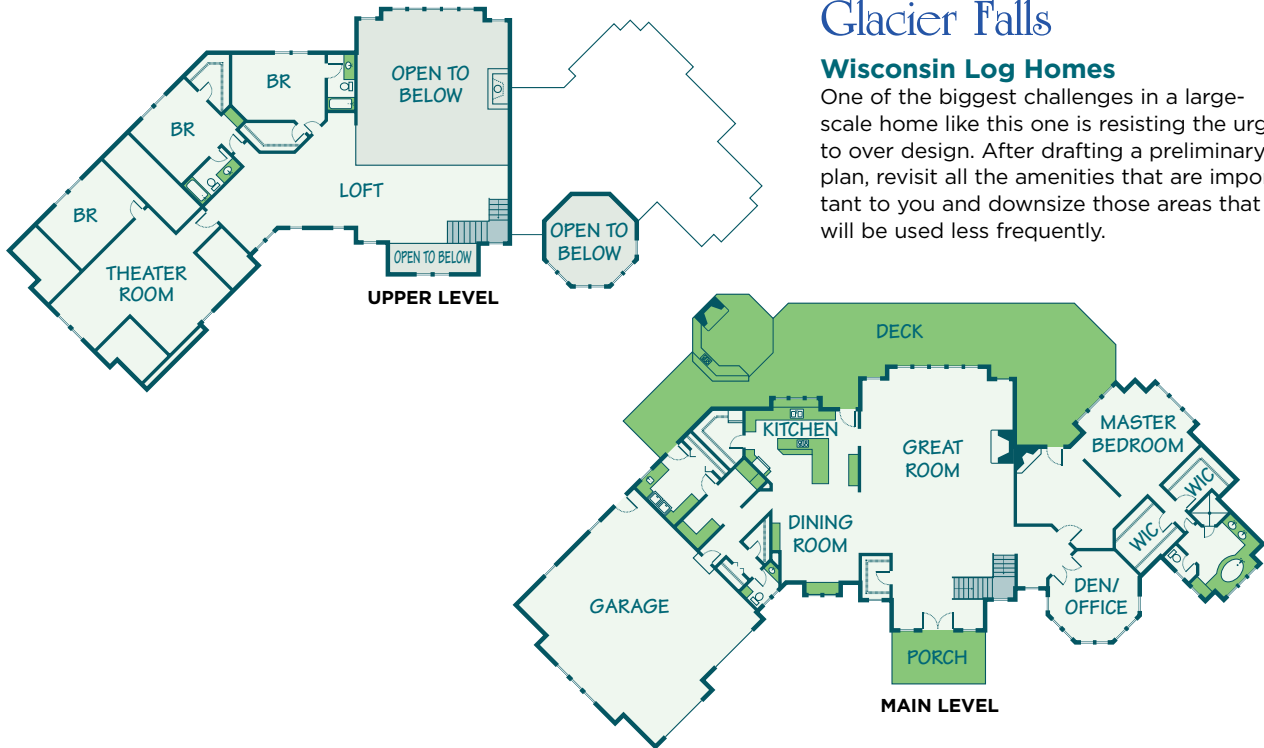
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Glacier Falls

Wisconsin Log Homes

One of the biggest challenges in a large-scale home like this one is resisting the urge to over design. After drafting a preliminary plan, revisit all the amenities that are important to you and downsize those areas that will be used less frequently.



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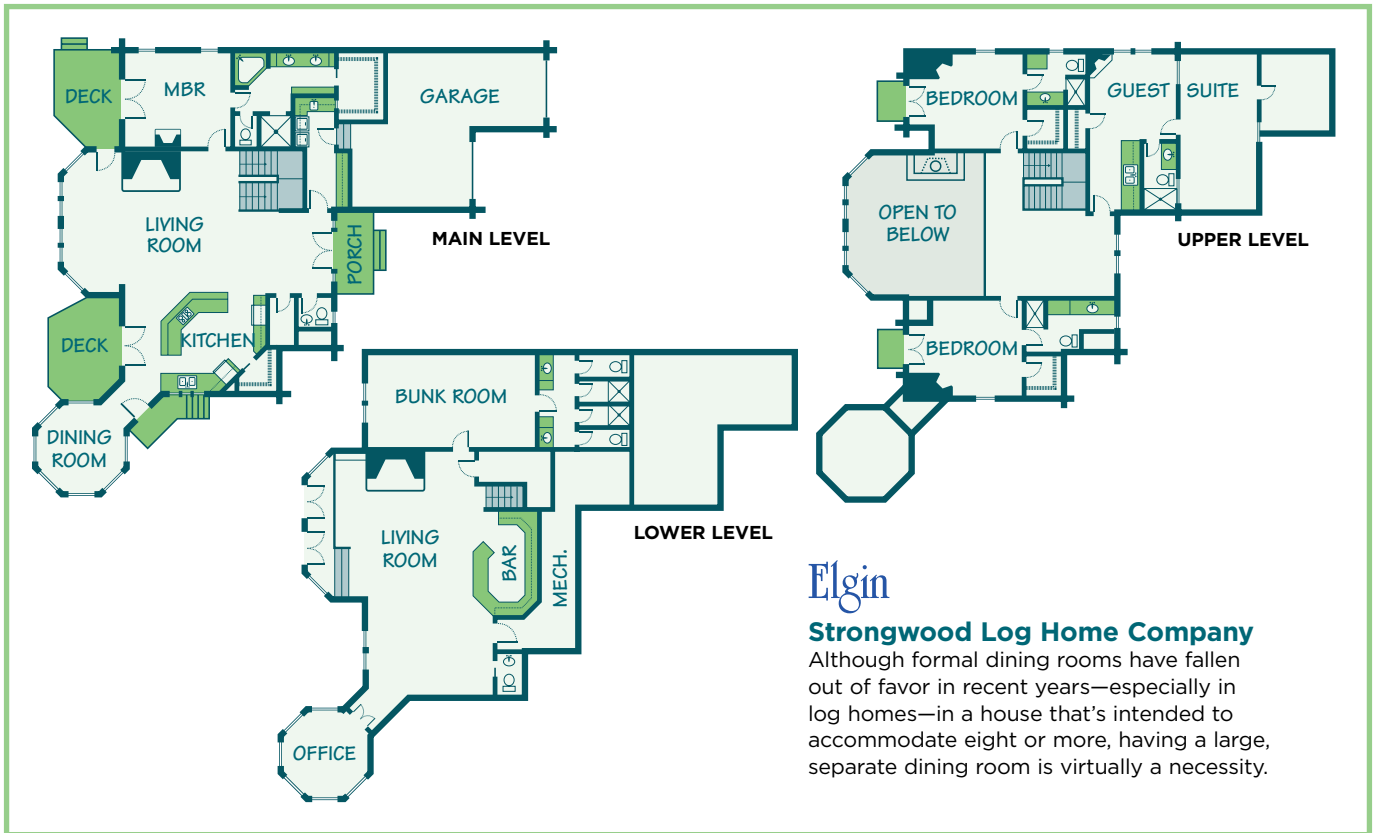
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Although formal dining rooms have fallen out of favor in recent years—especially in log homes—in a house that’s intended to accommodate eight or more, having a large, separate dining room is virtually a necessity.

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people eating at once, it can be a very smart idea. You'll likely also need a breakfast room (not just a nook) and in a large home, you'll definitely want two laundry rooms—one for each side of the house. —David Creasman

- Avoid the urge to over-design your home. After agreeing on a preliminary plan, revisit all of the amenities that are important to you and downsize or simplify those areas that are used less frequently, such as guest rooms and part-time home offices. Sticking to a budget, even if it's large, will help you focus on what's important to you (and your check-book). —Brian Delwiche ■

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