

Rural meets urban as barn doors slide inside

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The urban barn door is sliding into the home front. Demand for these movable monoliths has grown in recent years as homeowners, including condo dwellers and suburbanites, are looking for solutions with character.

Besides their industrial-chic style — a product of the lofting of America — the sliding doors and hardware serve useful purposes. An everyday hinged door takes up 9 square feet, eating up precious floor space in a hallway or square-foot-crunched condo, points out Jeremy Crowder, vice president of KNC, a third-generation door hardware business in Canada.

“Not only are sliding doors efficient for the homeowner, they’re good for condo developers,” Crowder says.

However, extra wall space is required to the left or right of an urban barn door to accommodate its large size. Ideally, the door should be at least 6 inches wider than the opening. Still, it’s more efficient than a 36-inch swinging door or sets of them.

Hardware is often the priciest part of the indoor sliders, usually starting at about \$1,000. A few months ago, KNC introduced the Crowder Round

Track, exposed European-style stainless steel with nylon wheels at the top. A barely visible guide-block in the floor helps keep the door on track. All it takes is two fingers to silently and smoothly glide 400 pounds of wood, metal, glass or other material. The hardware is shock-absorbing to keep a residential door from sounding like an authentic hay-holding barn door.

“If you’re entertaining, you want people to remember the party and not the rickety door,” says furniture and product designer Joe Munson of Leawood, who has created large-scale sliding doors for local clients and others in New York.



Exotic aesthetic
Lee Norman of Kansas City recently bought neighboring unit to his River Market condo. wall between the two loft spaces was removed. Norman wanted the space to be open sometimes closed others.

“‘Shut’ is important,” says Norman, chief medical officer at the University of Kansas Hospital. His 28-year-old son, Alex, an architectural designer for solar energy systems, relocated from Southern California to Kansas City and is temporarily living with him. Norman wants him to have privacy. “But he knows they’re both my sides.”

Norman considered pivoting doors and other options. But Rees Michael of North Star Remodel in Kansas City suggested the urban barn door because it acts like a movable wall.

Instead of buying a pre-made door, Norman hired Ryan Bennett and Reid Benson of Dead Leaf Designs in Kansas City to construct a 6-by-8 1/2-foot door. The custom 250-pound door has an industrial plywood-composite core with a zebrawood and wenge veneer. A stainless steel handle and rays accent the exotic woods.

“We thought it should complement his art,” says Bennett, who installed the door earlier this month. Norman worked with native people in Alaska and has regional handcrafts on display, including pieces



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