Four years ago, representatives from 19 inner-ring suburbs in the Kansas City metro area formed the First Suburbs Coalition to work together on finding solutions to common problems. These communities generally have little or no undeveloped land for new housing and an aging public and private infrastructure, so attracting and retaining residents and businesses can be a challenge.

More than half of the homes in first suburbs were built in the post-WW II era, and these homes are now functionally out-of-date. They often have small closets, one-car garages, no master suite, and too few bathrooms. In general they do not compete well with modern homes built in outlying suburbs. Many residents love their neighborhoods, but yearn for modern conveniences. If first suburbs are to prosper they need to encourage the remodeling and modernization of their housing stock to meet the needs of current residents and attract new homebuyers.

In 2005, the coalition published the Idea Book. The book provides homeowners with detailed concepts for modernizing four home styles commonly found in the area — ranch, two story, Cape Cod and split level — along with tips on general design considerations, financing and energy efficiency.