

Smaller Homes, 'Memory Points' Among New Home Design Trends

Open floor plans, energy-efficient features, and a lot of closet space are among the elements that home buyers are seeking in new homes, according to industry experts at this year's International Builders' Show. The research and trends presented at the show offer valuable insights and information to homebuilders so that they can build homes that appeal to the today's consumer preferences.



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large living rooms, soaking tubs and second-floor laundry rooms are no longer on the list of "must haves." Homebuyers apparently found that the convenience of not having to carry laundry to another floor was outweighed by the noise that interrupted their sleep.

A survey of 20,000 homebuyers in the United States and Canada revealed that there are a number of features in new homes that are considered non-negotiable across almost all demographic groups. The top five features include: walk-in closets – mentioned by 66 percent of first-time buyers as a "must have"; energy-efficient appliances; linen closets; a large kitchen; and overall

energy efficiency.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average size of a new single family home decreased from 2,438 square feet to 2,377 in 2010. As a result, open floor plans are now in high demand because they not only are more practical for entertaining, but the lack of walls and closed-off spaces make the home seem much larger. Today's homebuyers also are looking for small details dubbed 'memory points' in their new homes – features such as a built-in desk under a stairway, or a courtyard tucked between two downstairs bedrooms.

Now, more than ever, the kitchen is now the hub of the home. Even if



busy families are bringing home takeout, they want the kitchen island to be large enough to serve a multi-tasking purpose as a place to do homework, crafts, and pay bills – as well as to enjoy coffee on a Sunday morning.

Natural finishes are also more popular than ever. Recycled flooring, using a mix of wood grains on the cabinets and architectural details that reflect the indigenous building of the region are more important to buyers.

Research also indicates that homebuilders should pay attention to a growing group of homebuyers known as WINKs – Women with No Kids. These women have distinct

preferences that do not fit into the usual categories that home designers talk about: first-time buyers who tend to be singles and young professionals, move-up buyers who usually have children, or empty-nesters. WINKs have more buying power than a generation ago and are seeking smaller homes that have multipurpose rooms for entertaining along with retreat spaces for themselves.

For more information on area home building trends, or to find a homebuilder in the Greenville area, contact the Home Builders Association of Greenville at (864) 254-0133 or www.HBAofGreenville.com.