Something old, something new

Savvy homebuyers shuffle some priorities – but not all

BY JESSICA SIBLEY
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SALEM — Sale by association. It's something the Upstate prides itself on.

Visitors come to vacation in the mountains or on the lakes and end up staying for good.

Transplants from the north continue to grow the local population, albeit at a slower pace than in time's past. However, with each new generation the process of relocating takes on new wrinkles.

That's what happened with Annie and Greg Mason.

Mason had an opportunity to move here from Chicago for his job. They liked the lower cost of living but had no intentions of settling when it came to buying a house.

"There were about seven things that we really wanted or needed," he said. "We did our research on what will save money in the long run and that's what mattered most. Nearly every home inspector and agent agreed that more and more buyers were focusing on what we did."

To start, the Masons wanted a home with low maintenance.

"Mainly, I wanted the floors to be something easy to care for," Annie said. "If they were tile or wood, I knew I was going to like it. However, we wanted carpet in the bedrooms. This house had both. The vinyl siding was big too. The easier to take care of and keep looking nice, the better. We're not a fix-it-ourselves type of

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Annie and Greg Mason enjoy life outside of Salem after buying their first home. Once living in an apartment in Chicago, Greg Mason had the option to move for his job. "We didn't just want to settle," he said. "We were probably pickier than the average first-time buyer."

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couple."

A study and survey done by Avid Ratings shows the current homebuyer to be a bargain shopper but not entirely "green" savvy. While many buyers want lower utility costs, the survey showed that buying a home with recycled products wasn't very important to them.

"We knew we didn't want big panels of glass," Greg said. "This house didn't, and it was newly insulated with relatively new windows. Both were big selling points for us."

Janely Simpson, an independent real estate agent, said classic renovations will help the seller and the buyer.

"If your kitchen or

Bargain shoppers

bathroom was renovated, it's a really important feature," she said. "That hasn't changed for years, and it will stay high on the list of a buyer's want for years too."

When it comes to that kitchen, the survey showed that plenty of space, new appliances and an island are the biggest selling features.

"Ours had new appliances," Annie added. "That was great. But one thing I was hoping for and never saw in any of the homes we looked at was counter to ceiling cabinets. The space above the cabinets is usually dead space. If they went to the ceiling, it would be more efficient."

When it comes to the room total, the survey said it was more about square footage rather than bedrooms.

"This is a four-bedroom house," Greg said. "But we knew we wanted to knock down a wall and have a large office. This was perfect for our plan."

The survey agrees: a den or study remains in the top five requests for all types of buyers.

When it comes to the school district, the Masons were pleased and added that was another important feature.

Other top sellers for current home buyers include two-car garages, soaking tubs, big showers, fresh decor or paint, gathering spaces both inside and outside, recent renovations and high quality siding and roof.

sibley@dailyjm.com | (864) 882-2375