

TRENDS IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

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A topic of constant interest for most consumers is, "What's HOT and What's NOT" with regards to current trends in residential housing. As with many real estate professionals, walking into and out of houses is how an appraiser's typical workday is consumed. This constant exposure to housing is the basis for our observations of the ever-changing aspects of "housing fashion".

Kitchen - Size really does matter!!! Bigger continues to be Better. Versatile large island work areas continue to be the functional choice of many buyers. The island can serve as the location of a cook top, food preparation area, or in many cases an alternative to the kitchen table. Stainless steel appliances continue to be utilized in most price ranges. In "upper bracket" housing, hard- surface countertops are the norm with Granite and Silestone being the surface of choice over Corian. Oversized, 42" cabinetry continues to be popular in most custom-oriented construction, as well as being introduced even in more moderate price ranges.

Pantry Storage - Related to the Kitchen category, is the always important issue of pantry storage. Large, walk-in pantry areas are most functional and give versatility for both food storage or those pots and pans that don't seem to fit anywhere else. The "Butler Pantry" concept continues to be a popular floorplan component, especially for the entertaining family. This area provides additional storage capacity, as well as a visually pleasing area to display china and glassware.

Home Office - Need we elaborate??? We continue to work increasingly at home. As such, greater attention continues to be stressed in this area with emphasis on technology and functionality. More elaborate telephone and electrical wiring are commonplace. Larger, first floor Den areas are being emphasized in order to house computer equipment, copiers, etc... Many buyers are opting for floorplans with Den location in an informal area of the house, instead of near formal entryway for all to admire.

Ceiling Height - For the past several years, we have continued to sing the praises of the concept of "Volume". Nowhere is this more important than in the area of ceilings. Whereas the 8' ceiling is traditional in most established housing areas, the 9' ceiling remains a standard in most new marketplaces. It's amazing how an additional foot of ceiling clearance can create the illusion of greater living area. Vaulted, tray, scalloped and coffered ceilings continue to be utilized on a grand scale in most of our housing markets.

Car Storage - Increasingly, 3-car garages are becoming the norm in many new neighborhoods. This remains true, even if homebuyers don't have the vehicles to fill all the available garage spaces. Figure the lawn mower, snow blower, wheel barrow, wet/dry vacuum, bicycles and children's "vehicles", etc...into the equation, and you'll start understanding the math!!!

Basement - Whether being utilized in a home-office capacity, entertainment area or playroom for the kids, finished basements are becoming an essential component of the entire housing package. Even if buyers are not quite ready during construction of their home to finish the basement, special attention is being exercised toward this area of the house for the future. The extended 10' and 9' poured foundations to accommodate greater finished ceiling height, rough-in plumbing, placement of mechanical equipment in a manner conducive for future floorplan, special telephone and electrical wiring, and outside exit doors are common options in this regard.

Special Features - In addition to the aforementioned categories, newer housing trends are dictating an attention toward the "upgrade", (special features above and beyond standard components of a house). The most popular of these additional features are inclusive of the following: double-staircase, special attention to front door entry, (sidelites and transoms with beveled glass), arched windows, architectural shingle roofs, security system, exterior lighting, underground sprinkler system, brick pavers for patio, walkways, driveways, and generous use of trim package (i.e., crown moldings, wainscoting, chair rail, crown toppers over doorways, and extended base moldings).