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WHAT UPSCALE BUYERS REALLY WANT

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ON THE COVER:

The Unger Residence in Henderson, Nevada, offers a striking example of blurring the lines between a home's exterior and interior. Built by Blue Heron, the home took a platinum award for "One of a Kind Homes" in the 2013 Best in American Living Awards.



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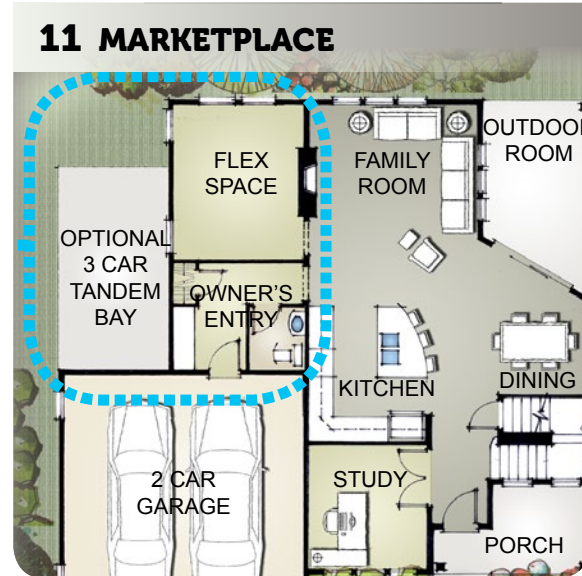
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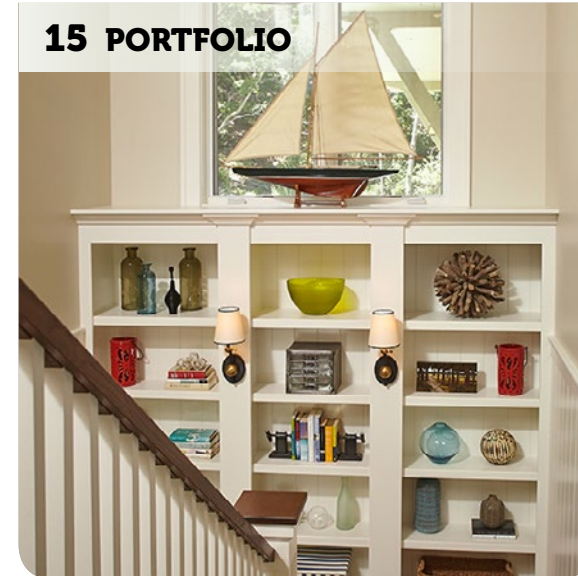
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Top Features

For Upscale Homes

By Paul Emrath, Ph.D.

Would upscale buyers rather have an elevator or a kitchen wine fridge? NAHB's *What Home Buyers Really Want* survey reveals what says "luxury" to those with a big budget.

A home is a complex product, with many different features that can make it more or less desirable to particular customers. Not all features are appropriate for all homes, and one of the goals of NAHB consumer surveys like the recent *What Home Buyers Really Want (WHBRW)* is to help builders identify which features to include—or not include—in a particular type of home.

To this end, NAHB used the consumer data from WHBRW to identify features appropriate at the upper end of the market for upscale homes priced at half a million dollars or more. Upscale items were identified from a long list of 120 features that cut across the gamut of windows, doors, kitchens, baths, specialty rooms, decorative features, accessibility, energy savings, as well as outdoor and community amenities. The WHBRW survey asked recent and prospective home buyers to rate each of these features on the following, consistent scale:

ESSENTIAL/MUST HAVE	Unlikely to buy a home without feature
DESIRABLE	Seriously influenced to buy home if feature is included
INDIFFERENT	Would not influence purchase decision
DO NOT WANT	Not likely to buy a home with this feature

NAHB applied a statistical analysis to the preference data and used it give each home feature a number on a "luxury" scale. The items at the top of this scale are indeed luxury features most appropriate for upscale homes, because buyers expecting to pay at least \$500,000 for a home are more likely to want them, while buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000 often explicitly reject them.

The top five upscale features by this measure are shown below. Following the precedent of *The Late Show with David Letterman*, the list of top items is presented in reverse order:

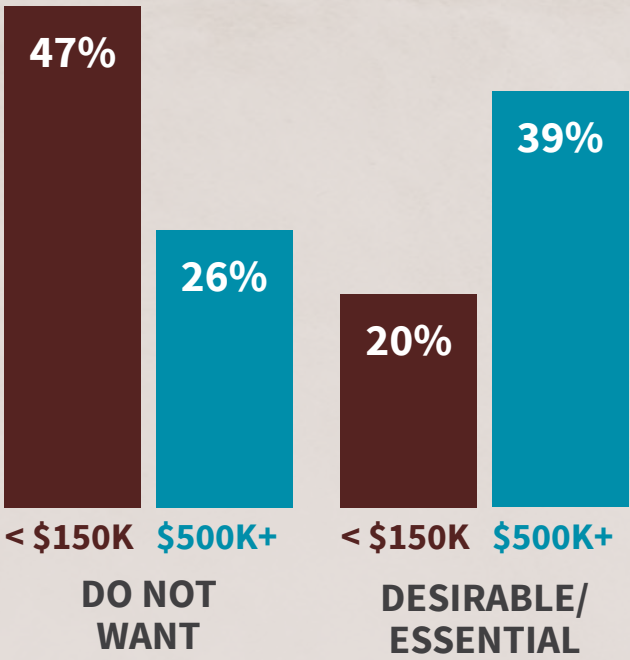


#5 Two-story Entry Foyer

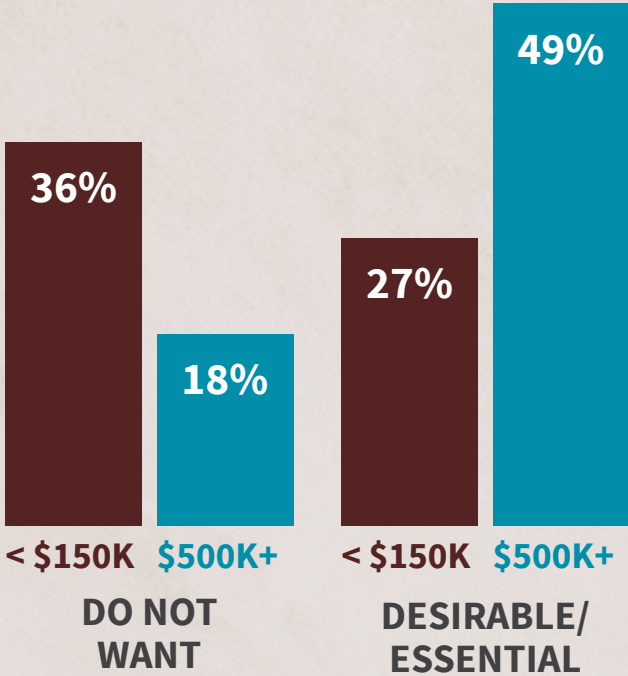
A two-story foyer creates a visually impressive entrance that, not surprisingly, is particularly attractive to buyers at the top end of the market. A soaring open space filled with light imparts a luxurious feeling immediately upon entering

Proofs & Truths

the home. Thirty-nine percent of buyers expecting to pay \$500,000 more for a home rate a two-story foyer essential or desirable, compared to 20 percent of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000. A two-story foyer is truly a luxury, however, in that it consumes space that needs to be conditioned or could serve a more utilitarian function. It also introduces some complications in framing, covering and insulating the walls. This may help explain why 47 percent of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000 explicitly reject a two-story foyer, compared to 26 percent of buyers expecting to pay \$500,000 or more.



#4 An Outdoor Kitchen



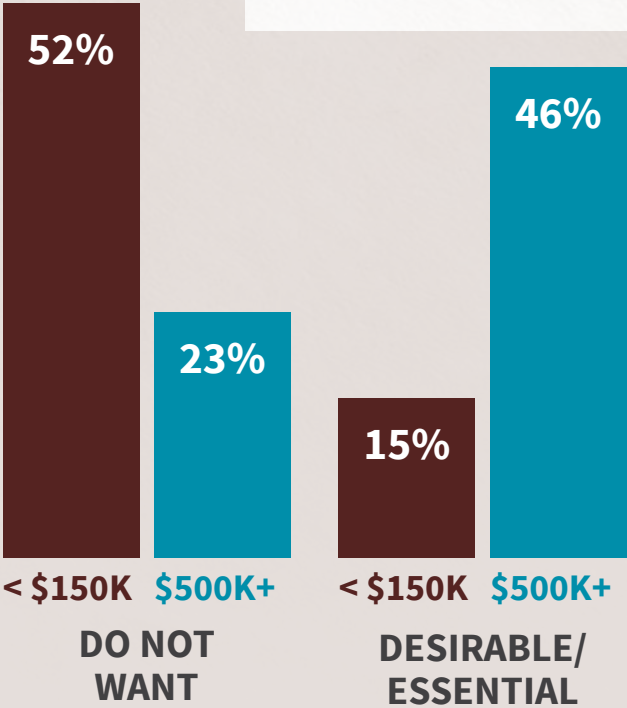
Although an outdoor kitchen may be a relatively simple expanded grilling area, it may also be a more elaborate affair with many of the amenities found in an indoor kitchen, including a sink, refrigerator, lighting, cabinetry, and natural stone countertops. Variants of these products are sometimes designed specifically for use outdoors—by waterproofing them, for example. It’s probably not surprising that what often amounts to a second complete

kitchen constructed outdoors qualifies as a luxury item that seems primarily appropriate in upscale homes. Nearly half of buyers expecting to pay at least \$500,000 rate an outdoor kitchen as desirable or essential, compared to a little over a quarter of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000. And 36 percent of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000 are unlikely to buy a home if it comes with an outdoor kitchen, compared to only 18 percent of \$500,000-plus buyers.



#3 Kitchen With a Wine Cooler

Following the outdoor kitchen is an amenity sometimes included in indoor kitchens—a wine cooler. A wine cooler can be of almost any size, but when evaluating a cooler as an integral feature that would be included in the price of a home, most consumers probably envision something large enough to crowd out another appliance or essential general storage space in a smaller kitchen. As a general rule, relatively few home buyers demand a wine cooler in their kitchens. In the survey overall, it was one of only three kitchen features rated desirable or essential by fewer than 30 percent of the respondents. However, 46 percent of buyers expecting to pay at least \$500,000 rate a wine cooler that favorably, compared to only 15 percent of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000.

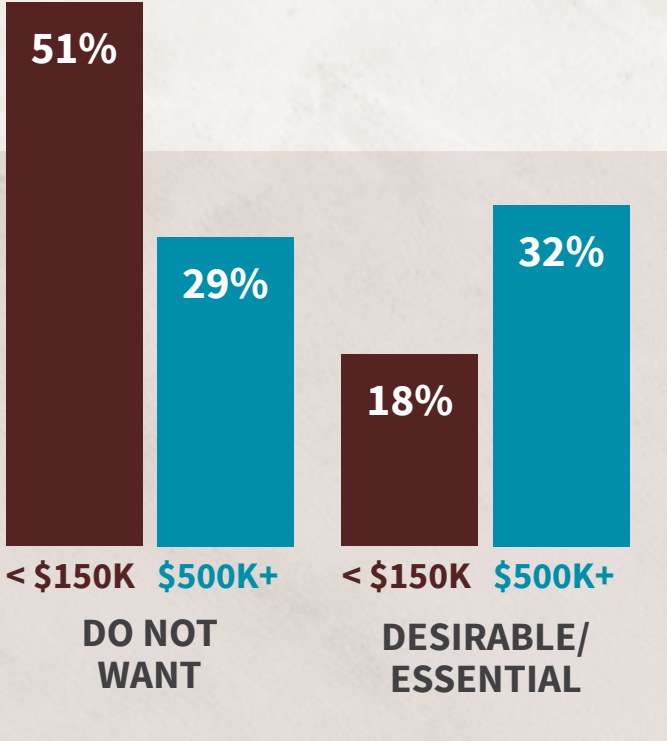




#2 Two-story Family Room

Like a two-story entry foyer, a two-story family room is dramatic, yet uses space that needs to be heated or could be used for some other purpose—the very definition of a luxury. The space consumed is generally greater for a two-story family room, because there is more floor space in the typical family room than the typical entry foyer.

Over half of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000 say they are unlikely to buy a home with a two-story family room, compared to 29 percent of buyers expecting to pay at least \$500,000. And 32 percent of the \$500,000-plus buyers rate a two-story family room as desirable or essential, compared to only 18 percent of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000.



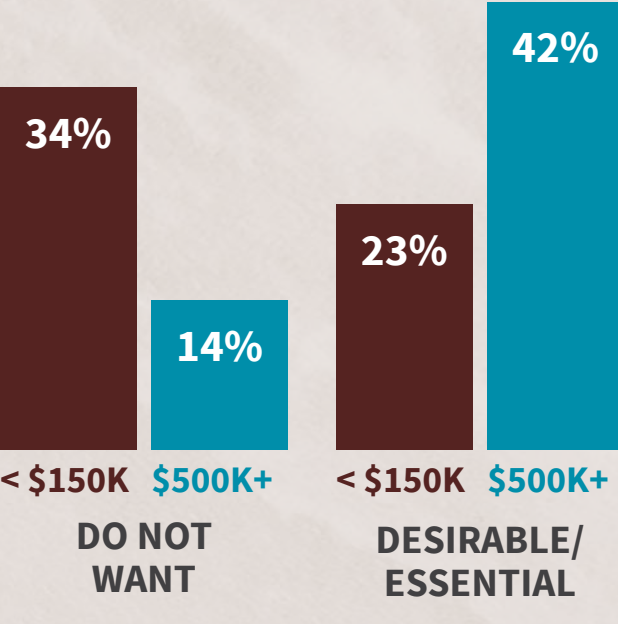
#1 Kitchen With a Warming Drawer



Like a wine cooler, a warming drawer is a specialty item that takes up space which would be allocated to more general purposes in a small kitchen. Also like a wine cooler, it is one of the few kitchen features rated essential or desirable by fewer than 30 percent of home buyers overall.

However, a significantly larger share (42 percent) of buyers expecting to pay at least \$500,000 want a warming drawer, compared to only 15 percent of buyers expecting to pay under \$150,000. Only 14 percent of the \$500,000-plus

buyers say they are unlikely to buy a home with a warming drawer—the smallest “do not want” percentage for any item discussed above, which helps explain why a warming drawer in the kitchen ranks as the number one feature most appropriate in upscale homes.



QUESTIONNAIRE

Feature	Do Not Want	Desirable	Essential
Warming Drawer	34%	23%	42%
Wine Cooler	31%	21%	48%
Stainless Steel Appliances	29%	32%	39%
Hardwood Floors	28%	33%	39%
Granite Countertops	27%	34%	39%

Many more features are assessed in the full survey; these are just the top five. For instance, the statistical model shows relatively little difference between the fifth-ranked upscale amenity, the two-story entry foyer, and the next two items on the list: an elevator and a wet bar. Also keep in mind that only features listed in the NAHB survey question could be included. Although the list was fairly long, it's difficult to capture every

possible amenity a builder might incorporate into a new home. Subject to these caveats, this information should be useful to builders in showing not only features that are good to include in higher priced homes, but also features that should usually be left out of lower priced homes—not only to save cost, but because a substantial share of buyers at these lower price points do not want these features. ■

Paul Emrath is NAHB's Vice President for Surveys and Housing Policy Research.



Luxury Living Redefined

in Smaller Spaces

Everyone knows bigger doesn't always mean better. Here's how to make smaller homes just as luxurious and livable as large ones.

By Brooke Fishel

Whether empty-nesters who are downsizing or home owners who recognize they have a house too large to maintain, many people are deciding to move into smaller homes that better fit their lifestyles.

But, while these homes may be smaller, expectations remain to keep them luxurious. So *Best in American Living* asked three experts to share what their clientele expect when building a new, smaller home.

White pine flooring, plenty of glazing, and gorgeous views appeal to downsizing buyers at The Pinehills, a master-planned community in Plymouth, Massachusetts.



Drawing Board

THE WELL-APPOINTED KITCHEN

The kitchen will always be the star of the home. “The kitchen is where I most often see the home buyer’s raised expectations in quality of finishes from granite countertops, to white pine floors, to beadboard accents,” said Tony Green, managing partner of The Pinehills, a master-planned community in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Susan Cosentini, of New Earth Living, which creates communities in upstate New York, agrees that kitchens are the rooms where people want to see finer details, notably islands.

“In fact, I’ve seen islands actually get bigger in homes where people are downsizing,” she said. Because smaller homes mean the loss of more formal rooms like dining and living rooms, islands provide additional seating and a place where more people can congregate while the home owner is cooking or entertaining.

“The kitchen is where I most often see the home buyer’s raised expectations in quality of finishes from granite countertops to white pine floors...”

Carson Looney, founding principal of Looney Ricks Kiss, an architecture firm based in Memphis, adds that buyers also expect quality, higher-end, functioning appliances and cabinets.

“They want their appliances to be the same as those that would be found in a home double the size and price and quality cabinets that have hardware and glides that won’t fall apart,” said Looney. “They want drawers rather than doors and shelves. And, they want the design of these items to accommodate their true needs rather than just filling up space from one wall to the next.”

SMART DESIGN

Beyond the kitchen, people who are downsizing understand they are giving up physical space in the rest of their home—but they don’t want it to appear that way.



“They don’t want any of the fluff,” said Looney. “No nutty wasted space such as foyers, grand staircases or oversized second bedrooms.”

Smaller-home buyers would rather have a larger open floor plan in the main level of the house that incorporates the family’s day-to-day lifestyle.

Cosentini does this by staying away from severe 90-degree angles that can cut off rooms from each other and instead

High-end finishes, cabinet drawers instead of doors, and a free-standing island that can double as a table for entertaining, appeal to move-down buyers at The Pinehills in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

uses softer finishes and designs that flow more naturally from room to room.

Looney has also found ways of using space efficiently. Instead of large vaulted ceilings, he incorporates quality, scaled interior spaces which function better with the furniture and home owner.



Creating spaces that flow naturally from room to room works well for downsizing buyers. Here, a double-sided fireplace divides rooms without cutting them off from each other.

All three experts underscore the need for smart window design to help with the perception of more space. “Incorporating more windows throughout the home helps close the gap between indoor and outdoor living, giving the home owner the illusion of more space,” said Green.

Looney stressed that the market for these homes understands the difference in quality and budget items. So a designer needs to not only use quality windows, but be smart about sizing and placement for quality of natural lighting within the home. “Glare is an issue with those move-down buyers who are aging, and it is produced by intense light from one direction. Windows on multiple walls of a space create a balanced natural light which creates a feeling of comfort and ‘home’ for them.”

But, because windows are getting bigger and more prevalent in homes, it is

important for a builder or architect to take into account the views the home owners will have outside of these windows.

“It goes without saying that home owners are more interested in a view that is not just another person’s house,” Green said. “Whenever possible we build a home so that the primary views are of the woods, water, golf course or of a beautiful horizon.” This is done through smart site planning and keeping existing trees as much as possible.

STORAGE: THE UNDERSTATED LUXURY

“Downsizing, no matter at what level, can be both a freeing and traumatic experience for a home owner,” said Cosentini. “They understand the need to get rid of things

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Buyers who are downsizing may want less square footage, but they don't want to skimp on quality fixtures and finishes—especially not in the master bath.

with the move, but they still want to hold on to nostalgic items or holiday decorations they might not need every day.” Thus, one luxury people will not give up when moving to a smaller home is storage.

All three experts strongly agreed on this point.

To address this with her clients, Cosentini incorporates attic trusses to make up for the loss of traditional basements or storage spaces that take up square footage. This space is often underutilized and is a great place to incorporate extra space that can be used as a loft or for storage.

Green also finds that his buyers need and require storage space, but he does include basements as they are standard in his region and is an expectation of his buyers to have one in their new homes.

Drawing Board

He makes sure it isn't lost space, however, by building in features that allow the basement room to be finished out later by the home owner for other uses, with windows and a door that exits out to the backyard so it isn't dark and closed off.

“True adequate storage is much more critical than some new ‘exciting thing,’” said Looney. “Great storage is exciting to the [downsizing] market, including walk-in closets that are at minimum 6'-6" wide so you don't have to walk in side-ways and you can see what you have. This also includes special use storage for life's items and collections.”

Looney sums it up well. “We're not talking about first-, second- or third-time move up buyers who want to get more,” he said. “We're talking about folks who have experienced a few homes, who have been through the phases of life and are now empty nesters. They need to shed themselves of what they don't need but have a great desire and need for the important things to truly work for their new lifestyle. The market is begging for *real homes* that can work for decades to come.” 🏡

Brooke Fishel is a communications consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area.





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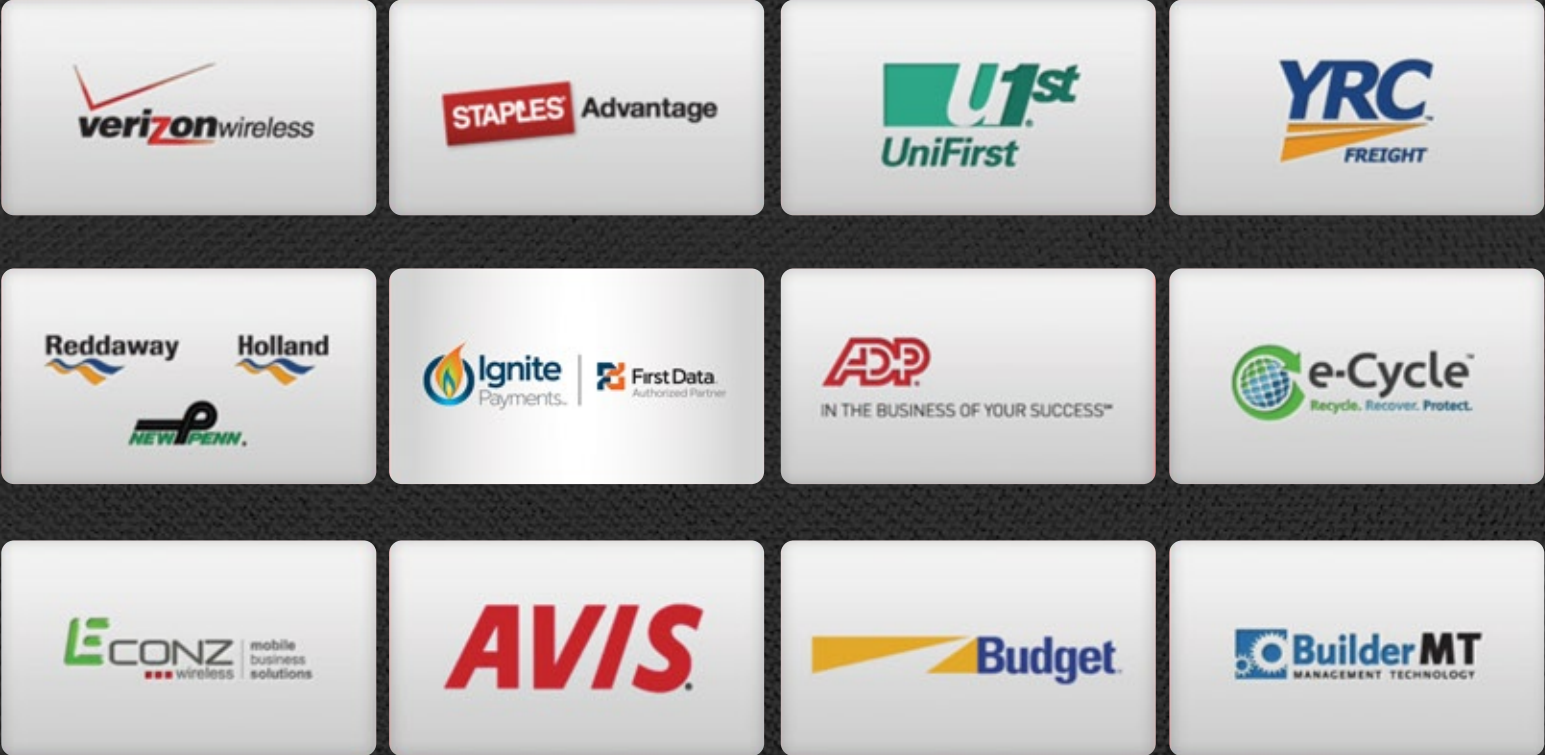
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Master baths should be “I Deserve It” features, with artful fixtures, hotel spa-type finishes, and glass-wrapped showers.

Spaces that can flex from project spaces to home offices to kids’ gaming rooms are “design difference makers” to buyers.

that provide them something new, different, and special. To address this trend, our firm has begun integrating what we call “I Deserve It Features” into our designs. These often become features that buyers use to identify and differentiate our builder clients in the market.

The notion of “I Deserve It Features” was first identified back in 1991 by trend forecaster Faith Popcorn and the concept rings true today. Popcorn observed that consumers want more than strict utility; they want to be pampered and nourished by their purchase. Where else better to apply this notion than in the home? “I Deserve it Features” are an indulgence, an emotional reward that goes beyond standard amenities and accessories. And no, these aren’t just skin deep; there is no lasting satisfaction in mere tinsel. Home buyers still want value, but they also want a home with exceptional design features. The features are distinctive attributes of the design that reinforce the buyer’s feeling that, “I’m special; I deserve special.”

I Deserve It!

The Features that Sell Homes in Today’s Market

By Jerry Gloss, AIA, CAASH

Buyers are looking for “difference makers” in home design today— elements that meet their need to feel special and pampered. Here’s how to include those stand-out features.

Four years ago, in the midst of the recession, the battle cry in housing was “Price Point!” Thankfully, times have changed; the economy has improved and buyers are in search of value. While remaining cautious conservative, buyers are looking for the merger of price point and “design difference makers”

What do “I Deserve It Features” mean to the builder? They provide a tantalizing invitation, motivation, and excitement for today’s discerning buyer. “I Deserve it Features” put the “wow” in a home that sets the standard—the high water mark—for the buyer as they compare the competition. Builders incorporating these features into their homes will separate themselves from the rest of the market.

Here are five value-based design attributes for today’s market:

- 1. **Enduring Design:** This allows owners to remain in the home for longer periods of time—perhaps from kindergarten to cap and gown—without the need to move. The home flexes to a family’s changing needs. Enduring design enhances functionality of the home.
- 2. **Enhanced Specifications:** Buyers notice and are willing to pay for higher quality materials and sustainability-based construction.
- 3. **Lifestyle Focused Spaces:** Designs must integrate the rooms, spaces, and features of today’s lifestyles and market segments.
- 4. **Flex Spaces:** Found throughout the home, these spaces can support a wide range of uses that can be determined by the buyer based on need and timing.

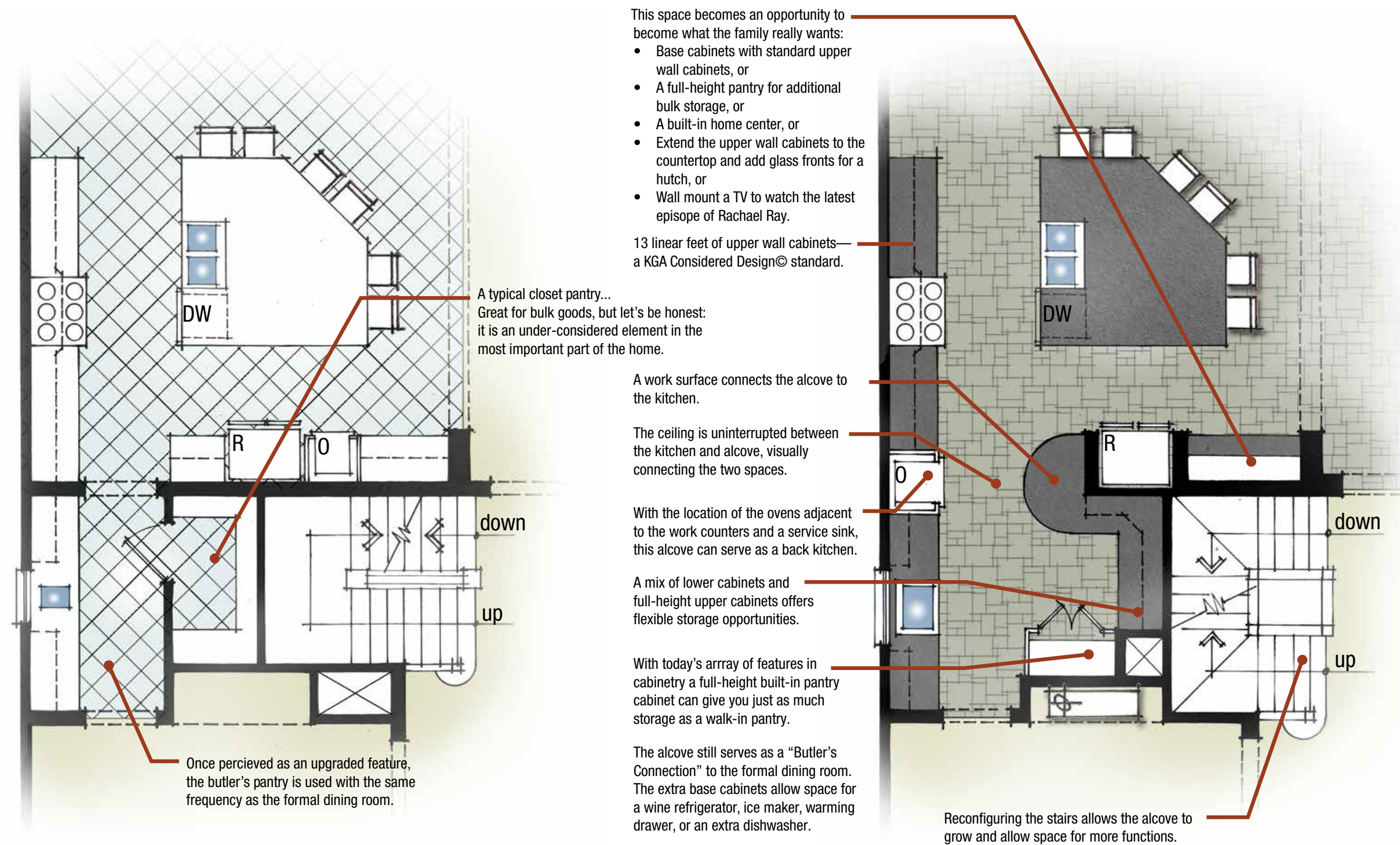
5. **Special Feeling Spaces:** These provide opportunities for escape and rejuvenation, a chance to nurture the soul. These spaces take you away from the rat race...if only for a few minutes.

Here’s how we incorporate these value-based design attributes into our plans and create “I Deserve It Features” (IDIF):

The Kitchen: This area is the most significant lifestyle-focused space in the home; it is the crossroads of the home, serving as a place for kids’ homework, family discussions, entertainment, and home management, in addition to food prep and dining. Upgrades in materials and appliances are a great opportunity to utilize IDIF. Consider substituting recycled glass or polished concrete in place of granite counters giving your buyer an opportunity to be green. Added design features such as entertainment centers and replacing the underused butler’s pantry with a kitchen alcove are considerations of today’s lifestyles. Builders and architects should use the kitchen to apply attributes 1, 2, and 3 listed above.

The Master Bath has become the spa bath; no news here. Escape, nurture, and personality are words describing the function of the bathroom beyond utility. Fixtures are works of art. Finishes rival those of a hotel spa. Glass-wrapped





of an enlarged owner's entry, a second study, a music alcove off the family room, a kids' electronic gaming room, a study area, or a project room. This room stands ready to serve multiple uses over the life span of ownership, providing optimal use and re-use. Attributes 1, 3, and 4 above can be applied when designing flex rooms.

The Owners' Entry is a highly-used portal between the garage and home. When property located and appointed with design features, it becomes the Grand Central Station of a busy family. Organization accessories, storage, benches, and counters stand out as details that make this zone particularly useful. This area can also serve as a home management hub and even include a project alcove—but never the laundry. The Owners' Entry should incorporate attributes 1 and 3 above.

We recommend builders step outside of their standard offerings and include 'I Deserve It Features' (even as an option) in their home designs. Buyers will be grateful and the competition will be running to catch up. ▲

showers appointed with benches and overhead showerheads add sophistication. The master tub seems to be disappearing. (Is it the living room of this decade?) The master bath of today allows

us to remove ourselves from the bustle and demands of the outside world...if only for a brief time. Apply attributes 1, 2, 3, and 5 above in designing the master bath and specifying finishes and fixtures.

Flex Rooms: A room or space that your buyer can customize and make their own: These spaces, typically located in the informal part of the home, flex in a number of ways. They may take the form

Jerry Gloss, AIA, CAASH, serves as Principal and Senior Partner of KGA Studio Architects in Boulder, Colorado.



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One of a Kind

Unique features from
award-winning homes

Brooke Fishel

Very few homes can be described as one of a kind. Here are two highly unique, superbly designed homes that offer great ideas for everyone.

Every year the Best in American Living Awards spotlights the brightest and best in home design. There is one special category for homes that are truly one of a kind.

These homes provide the latest and greatest in technology, architecture, and outside-the-box thinking.

Two of the 14 custom homes that snagged awards in 2013 displayed unique features that will no doubt catch on and start to make an appearance in the production market down the road.

The Unger Residence

BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN INDOORS AND OUTDOORS

This platinum award-winning home located just outside Las Vegas in Henderson, Nevada, shows how indoor and outdoor living can be incorporated seamlessly.

Builder Tyler Jones, principal owner of Blue Heron, said the company was able to create an indoor-outdoor feel by

integrating materials that work both inside and out. Unlike most homes, the Unger residence uses materials indoors that are usually considered only for the exterior, including stucco and stone, all-weather flooring materials, and steel. The builder also used windows and doors with seamless track details, and wood ceilings that continue from interior spaces to the outside.

“Our architecture is deliberate. It doesn’t matter if it is inside or outside, it is continuous,” said Jones. “We take the landscaping and pool elements and bring them inside and then continue them back outside again. It blurs that line and lets the eye follow the design element throughout the home.”

The home doesn’t just have an outdoor room, it features a complete living space outside of the house by including outdoor fireplaces, full theater and media systems, surround sound, misting systems, and outdoor heaters.

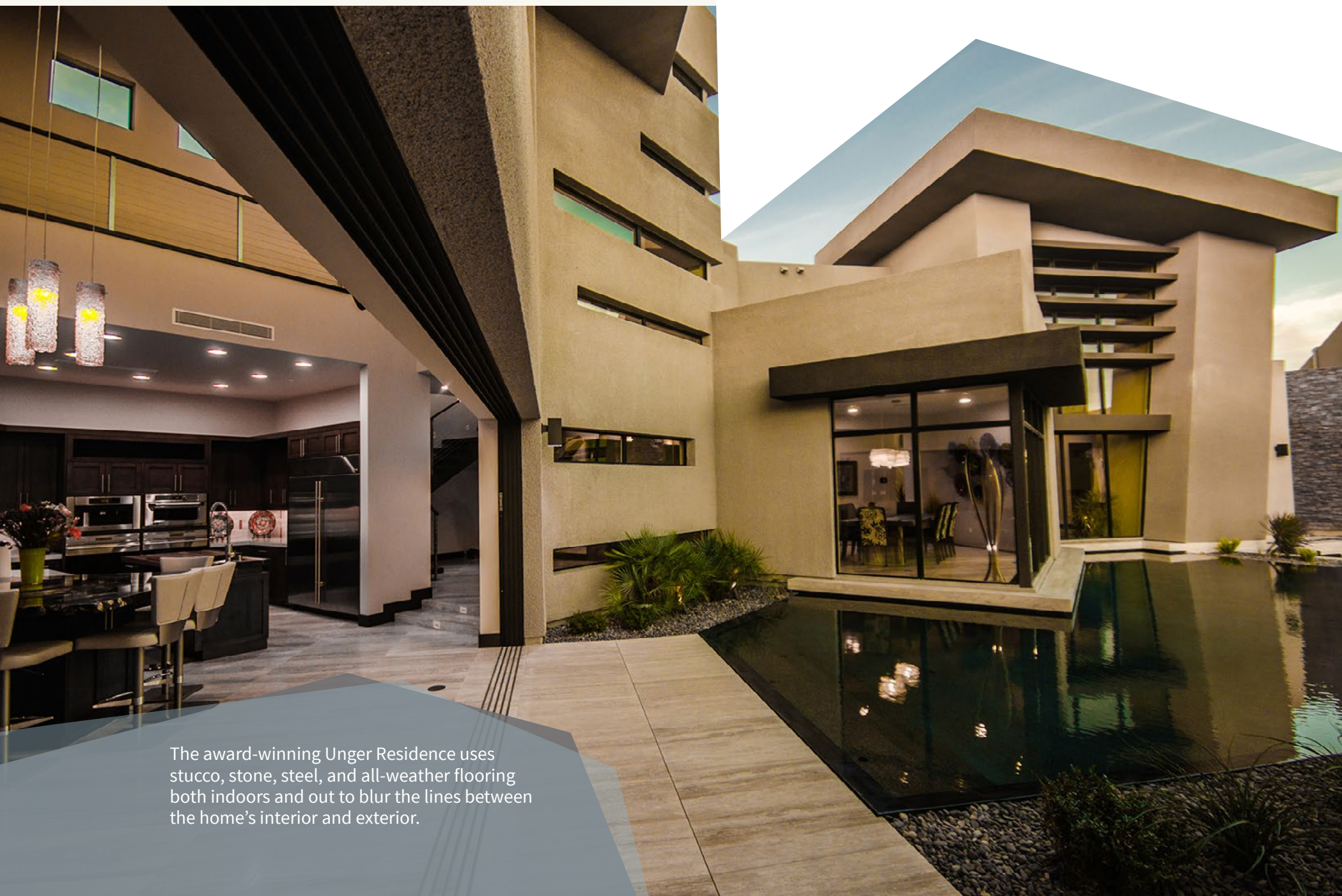
“When we design a custom home, we’re mapping out furniture layouts so that it flows from inside to out. We want it to make sense from a usability format, how you’re going to sit, dine, entertain or relax.”

And, while all of this indoor-outdoor living may seem wasteful energy-wise, it is quite the opposite with this home.

“We put a huge focus on green building technology and design, we use a lot of solar panels and passive solar design by situating the home to shade the glass allowing in more indirect natural light,” said Jones. “Since we are in Las Vegas, we are careful not to have large south-facing windows”.

They are also able to achieve this open feel but keep heat out of the home by using a flat roof design with closed-cell foam, a vapor barrier and coating that reflects sunlight. “This is just the start,” said Jones. “In our homes, everything green is a standard feature.”

Jones is glad to see that some of the things that were once only seen in custom homes are now making it to the production home market, including the increase in audio/visual equipment, smart home technology, and solar panels. “These are starting to become a lot more affordable and accessible to everyone.”



The award-winning Unger Residence uses stucco, stone, steel, and all-weather flooring both indoors and out to blur the lines between the home’s interior and exterior.



Allenwood

A SINGLE FAMILY HOME BUILT FOR TWO FAMILIES

Situated on a beautiful lake in Montague, Michigan, this Silver Award-winning home was designed for two families. “The goal of this home was to make the space functional for both families while preserving the integrity of the design,” said Wayne Visbeen, president of Visbeen Architects. “The result is a clean yet aggressive design emphasizing comfortable living for parents and kids.”

The home has dual owner suites located on the main level with access to gorgeous views and outdoor living spaces. The cottage also offers plenty of bedrooms for the children—on a separate level—along with a variety of areas to gather, relax, and recreate.

The open floor plan includes living and dining spaces, but the kitchen is the star. The kitchen island forms a complete circle—in the style of a bar. Its open layout is surrounded by glass and serves as an entertainment space rather than just a kitchen.

The kitchen also looks out to the TV and fireplace on the other side of the room, where the TV can be hidden behind a rolling door to close it off when it isn’t needed. “TVs over fireplaces are becoming more common, but we don’t want to see it when it’s off, so the rolling door made for a unique feature and very functional piece,” he said.

But while the home accommodates two families and includes all these amenities, it isn’t overly large. Visbeen was able to

With seating, bookcases, and storage, the stair landing becomes a functional living space in this custom home.



accomplish this through smart planning and by optimizing space.

Visbeen gave the home’s two staircase landings functionality by adding a seating area to one and bookcases to both. These clever touches add visual appeal and give the spaces the

Portfolio

character of a full room. “It’s a little extension to a space that isn’t usually functional,” he said.

In the children’s rooms the bunks are built into the walls with a stair in the center. While these beds are fun spaces for kids, they have large mattresses so adults can use them if needed.

Visbeen also incorporated the use of phantom-screened porches to allow rooms to easily open to the outside when the weather is nice, extending the living space.

He has recently started using a product called Suntuitive that he thinks will have a big impact in custom homes, as well as production housing down the road.

The product uses a special film in the glass that darkens with bright sun—similar to

The porches in this award-winning home feature phantom screens that help extend the living space to the outdoors.



Special film in the glass of these windows darkens with bright light to maintain perfect indoor lighting regardless of the amount of sunshine.

transition lenses in eyeglasses. This allows for full visibility with incredible energy efficiency.

These two award-winning homes are just the start of some unique and trend-setting features that the BALA judges saw in last year’s entries. To see more of these one-of-a-kind homes, as well as other award winning single-family, multifamily and remodeling award winners, visit bestinamericanlivingawards.com. 🏠

Brooke Fishel is a communications consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area.



How [Compact] is Your Community?

A NEW INDEX HAS THE ANSWER

By Claire Worshtil



Are high-density or low-density communities better for health and quality of life? A new study finds some unexpected answers.

Communities across the country are trending towards more walkable neighborhoods, more connections to jobs and services, and more variety in modes of transportation. Why is that? Does compact community design have an impact on the health and quality of life of the residents? The National Cancer Institute, the Brookings Institution, and Smart Growth America wanted to find out, so they commissioned a study by the Metropolitan Research Center at the University of Utah. The study, [“Measuring Urban Sprawl and Validating Sprawl Measures,”](#) introduces new sprawl indices and provides a ranking list of most compact and most sprawled counties and metropolitan areas.

This study updated a 2002 index based only on residential density and street accessibility. The sprawl index consists of four equally weighted factors—density, land use mix, centering, and street accessibility. The lower index values indicate more sprawl, the higher values point to more compact development patterns. (So technically speaking, it is more appropriate to call it a compactness index).

The new index’s four equally-weighted factors each combine several components of population, employment, or land use:

1. **Density factor** is combination of employment densities and shares of population living at each of three density levels—low density, medium to high density, and urban density.
2. **Mix factor** is a combination of conditions designed to capture land use mix:
 - Job-population balance—similar to employment rate,
 - Job mixing—the balance of various employment sectors such as retail, education, entertainment, and the like, plus
 - Average Walk Score—a walkability index provided by a private company.

3. **Centering factor** is a combination of shares of county population and employment in central business districts (CBD) or sub-centers, and variation in population and employment densities by Census Bureau block groups. Sprawl is associated with the absence of centers of any type and consequently low population and employment variability.
4. **Street Accessibility factor** is a combination of average block size, share of small urban blocks, intersection density, and share of four-way intersections for urban and suburban census tracts, designed to indicate how many different routes someone can take to get to the same place.

The ten most compact counties as measured by both the original and the new four-factor index largely overlap; however, the ten most sprawling counties are entirely different. Previously, counties ranked as most sprawling were small towns surrounded by farmlands. In reality this can be a very compact way to develop, and the new index uses data that shows the efficiencies of such areas.

In evaluating relationships between built environment and health and commute outcomes, it is more appropriate to use measures of sprawl by county (or even smaller level of geography, if available), since these geographic areas are typically smaller, more uniform than large metro areas, and correspond more closely to the environment in which people live, work, walk, shop, and play on a daily basis. However, below we show the top 10 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) for two reasons: first because the MSA names are more familiar to the general public, and second because many of the top ten counties are within the same MSA. The results are largely similar to the county-level results.



Miami, with its desirable waterfront property, is the eighth most compact MSA in the country according to the new four-factor index.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMPACTNESS (SPRAWL) INDEX AND OTHER OUTCOMES

Many researchers in the past have tried to link sprawl to physical inactivity, obesity, traffic fatalities, poor air quality, residential energy use, emergency response times, teenage driving, lack of social capital and private-vehicle commute distances and times. This researcher found that sprawl *is associated* with:

- Higher household vehicle ownership
- Lower walk shares of commute trips
- Less frequent transit use to work
- Longer commute times
- Higher fatal crash rates
- Higher obesity and certain chronic diseases (high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, diabetes).

10 Most Sprawling

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA)

in 2010 according to the New Four-Factor Index

- 1. Hickory—Lenoir—Morganton, NC MSA – 24.86
- 2. Atlanta—Sandy Springs—Marietta, GA MSA – 40.99
- 3. Clarksville, TN-KY MSA – 41.49
- 4. Prescott, AZ MSA – 48.96
- 5. Nashville-Davidson—Murfreesboro—Franklin, TN MSA – 51.74
- 6. Baton Rouge, LA MSA – 55.60
- 7. Riverside—San Bernardino—Ontario, CA MSA – 56.25
- 8. Greenville—Mauldin—Easley, SC MSA - 58.98
- 9. Augusta—Richmond County, GA-SC MSA – 59.18
- 10. Kingsport—Bristol—Bristol, TN-VA MSA - 60.00

10 Most Compact

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA)

in 2010 according to the New Four-Factor Index

- 1. New York—White Plains—Wayne, NY-NJ MD – 203.36
- 2. San Francisco—San Mateo—Redwood City, CA MD – 194.28
- 3. Atlantic City—Hammonton, NJ MSA – 150.36
- 4. Santa Barbara—Santa Maria—Goleta, CA MSA – 146.59
- 5. Champaign—Urbana, IL MSA – 145.16
- 6. Santa Cruz—Watsonville, CA MSA – 145.02
- 7. Trenton—Ewing, NJ MSA – 144.71
- 8. Miami-Miami Beach—Kendall, FL MD – 144.12
- 9. Springfield, IL MSA – 142.24
- 10. Santa Ana—Anaheim—Irvine, CA MD – 139



It is important to keep in mind that the study does not say that sprawl *causes* obesity, high blood pressure, or any other health condition; rather it only shows that sprawl *is associated with* these conditions.

SOME OTHER FUN BUT IMPORTANT FACTS

The study uncovers several unexpected links between the new measure of compactness and other outcomes:

- There is a higher level of moderate physical activity in sprawling counties.
- There is no difference in overall physical activity between sprawling and compactly built counties.
- Compact development is associated with higher total (including non-fatal) crash rates.
- Compact development is associated with higher serious injury crash rates.

The study also investigates the individual contribution of each of the four components of the new compactness index and uncovers several surprising relationships:

- Street accessibility, which indicates how many different routes someone can take to get to the same place, has no effect on vehicle ownership.
- The number of “centers” a county has does not affect the frequency with which people walk to work.
- Street accessibility has no effect on walk shares of commute trips.
- Land use mix has no effect on transit use.
- Lower density makes commutes less congested and cuts commute times.
- “Centering” and street accessibility have no significant effect on Body Mass Index (BMI).

The study authors also use county sprawl measures to evaluate the relationship of sprawl to air quality and life expectancy. The study finds that:

- Air quality is worse in compact counties, but that does not seem to significantly affect life expectancy.
- Compactness is associated with lower BMI and Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), which in turn improve life expectancy.
- Overall, life expectancy is higher in compact counties than in sprawling counties. Doubling the compactness index improves life expectancy by four percent (adding three years to the average life expectancy of 78 years).

The study authors also use sprawl measures to evaluate the relationship between sprawl and housing plus transportation (H+T) costs as measured by HUD’s Location Affordability Index (LAI). The study reports that:



Most Sprawling County according to the new Four-Factor Index (Oglethorpe County, GA)



Most Sprawling County according to the original Sprawl Index (Jackson County, KS)

- Households in compact areas tend to spend a higher share of their income on housing but a smaller share on transportation compared to households living in more sprawled areas.
- When housing and transportation (H+T) costs are combined, the differences in overall affordability of sprawled and compact areas are barely significant. Doubling the compactness index decreases H+T costs relative to income by 3 percent (for example, if the original H+T share of income is 35 percent, doubling the compactness index would decrease this share to 34 percent).

live in a high-density, urban environment. Many others want to live in a moderate-to-high-density, walkable community with access to transit. Others prefer to live in a lower-density community. We know this from consumer surveys and studies—and because families vote with their pocketbooks in the choices they make about where they live. While moderate-to-high-density development is appropriate for certain communities and markets, builders and developers still need to meet the needs of families that want to live in less compact areas. ▲

Claire Worshtil is the Program Manager for Land Use at NAHB and Associate Editor of *Best in American Living Magazine*.



In the end, variety in housing types and affordability remain important factors that should not be ignored when making land use decisions. Many people want to



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Lapping up Luxury Amenities



The day and age
where you can have
doggone everything.

By Deana Moore



When looking for a new home, the small things can make a big difference. Today's buyers want to have it all...and that includes Fido and Fluffy.

Not too long ago, many felt that pet ownership was a hassle, and that you couldn't have a busy life and a pet. Even if you had the time, there wasn't enough space to meet their daily needs. Yet recently, the American Veterinary Medical Association reported that more than 36 percent of households own dogs, 34 percent own cats or birds, and most of these homes include more than one critter companion, totaling over 84 million homes housing 152 million pets! Why is this important? Home buyers are increasingly concerned about where the scratching post stands and where the leash hangs.

It is not news that great amenities sell a home, but a new twist is that many communities are not only embracing pet amenities, they are using them to pull in fur-friendly buyers and get a "leg-up" on the competition. Pet ownership is continuing to grow, and having a pet is no longer seen as a hindrance to an active city resident or busy suburban family. In fact, having space to spend time and to socialize with other pet owners is becoming very important to millennials, families, and retirees. Scott Adams, Senior Principal at Bassenian Lagoni says "Dog networking' is huge. As people seek to connect with their community, one

Tools & Techniques

of the biggest emerging trends is centered on pets.”

“Whether it’s the community’s social network or the HOA announcing a ‘twilight group dog walk,’” Adams says, “or a community facility that includes dog spa stations, or even private homes with their own dog washing rooms, pets are now a preferred way to meet your neighbors and connect with your community.”

Treats, doggy bags, dog leash-parking and ground-level water fountains might seem like small things, and they are—physically. Most of them don’t have to be designed into a community and are easy to install or make available. However, these conveniences can be a big deal to residents. They create places for serendipitous encounters between pet owners and pets. Self-serve grooming stations, window seats, and indoor artificial turf playgrounds take a little more planning and financial input, but are showing a huge return on investment through increased sales or rentals.

Richard Lake, a founding partner of Roadside Development notes the importance of making multiple public-private spaces for tenants. “We wanted to make sure that there was a space for everyone. We have dog friendly furniture on the roof top den, and reading nooks by the fireplace for someone looking for a quieter



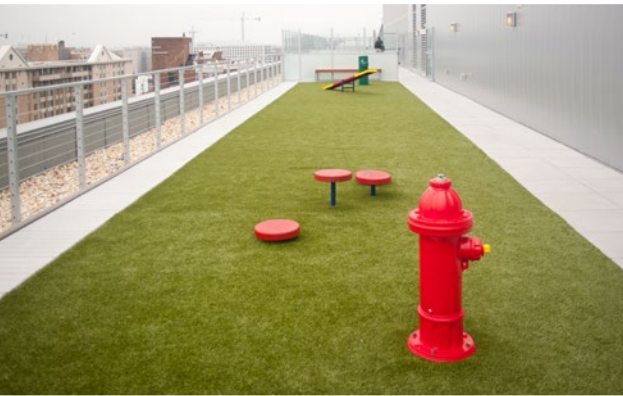
Dogs can help bring people together and add to a neighborhood’s sense of community.



A self-serve grooming station offers a great convenience to dog owners.

setting.” City Market at O, a luxury apartment building in the heart of D.C.’s historic Shaw neighborhood, has everything from a dog park (including red faux fire hydrants) to a pet grooming station and even a dog walker. “We’re hoping that these amenities and creating a community around them will get people to sign longer leases and renew their leases.” says Lake.

Some communities have found that offering special dog houses, bone-shaped pools and built-in water bowls are worth



A roof-top dog park, including faux fire hydrants and agility equipment, draws in renters at City Market at O, a luxury apartment community in Washington, D.C.

the investment to draw in potential buyers or renters who are willing to pay extra to have the perfect space for their companion. In Bluffton, South Carolina, the Hamilton Lake Community has a Dog Paddle Park, the region’s first in-community canine playground and exercise area.

In addition to many of the smaller pet amenities, high-end luxury residences

are offering concierge services like dog walking, doggy daycare (with web-cams), and routine in-home feedings. Builders and property managers are realizing that onsite grooming is becoming a must-have. If you can’t make it home to take your pet to the vet, no worries, they’ll bring Fido to you. Or better yet, bring the vet to Fido! Many of these concierge services don’t require upfront cost when designing and building, but in the long run they add peace of mind for busy owners.

One Mima Tower in New York City offers Dog City—a professional full-service pet spa with indoor and outdoor play spaces, grooming facilities and multiple other luxury services. Dog City’s owner, Leya Ogihar, says “It’s a luxury for New Yorkers.

Dog City, a full-service pet spa with indoor and outdoor play spaces, grooming facilities, and more, attracts renters to One Mima Tower in New York City.



Pet owners are willing to pony up some major cash to keep the furry members of their family healthy and happy.

Their dogs are their kids, and they want them to be well taken care of.” The culture that is created around this is very similar to children. Their “kids” play together all day and they want to know who the owners are. Leya continues by noting “Even non dog owners want to be a part of the community once they see what is going on. And dogs bring out the best in people which shows a softer side of what can otherwise be a pretty harsh New York.”

Over the past ten years, the amount of money Americans spend on their pets has increased by more than \$24 billion, according to the American Pet Products Association. And in 2014, projections are that around \$4.73 billion will be spent on pet services alone. When it comes to the

furry family members, owners are willing to pony up some major cash to keep every family member happy and healthy.

Does this mean that in the next decade every complex needs a rooftop dog park and every community needs a bone-shaped pool? Not necessarily, but building near a dog park might be worth considering, and having some small amenities such as doggy bags and watering bowls will help draw in the growing pet-lover population. And that should keep everyone’s tails wagging. 🏠

Deana Moore, serves as Program Manager, Design for NAHB’s Land Use and Design department.



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Green Products & Practices

The Standard in Good Design

By Alexandra Isham

NAHB’s recent Remodeling Marketing Index survey shows that most remodelers are incorporating plenty of green building products and practices into their work. Here are the top ten.

Fifty years ago, remodelers incorporating green products and practices into their projects would have been laughed at. But today, those who have not adopted green practices into their designs are the ones who raise eyebrows. Home owners who want to stay in their homes are choosing to remodel and are demanding that green features be incorporated into the new design to cut future costs. Home buyers, recognizing that green features can save money and may create a healthier living environment, are bypassing homes without them. Consumer demand for green is soaring, and today’s builders, remodelers, and designers must deliver.

The recent Remodeling Marketing Index survey by the National Association of Home Builders reveals that most remodelers consistently incorporate at least one green product or practice. In fact, a whopping 89 percent commonly utilize low-e windows! Even the tenth most popular feature—duct systems designed to minimize leakage—is used by more than half of the remodelers surveyed. The top ten features are all used by more than half of respondents, a reassuring number for advocates of the green industry. The top ten are listed below:

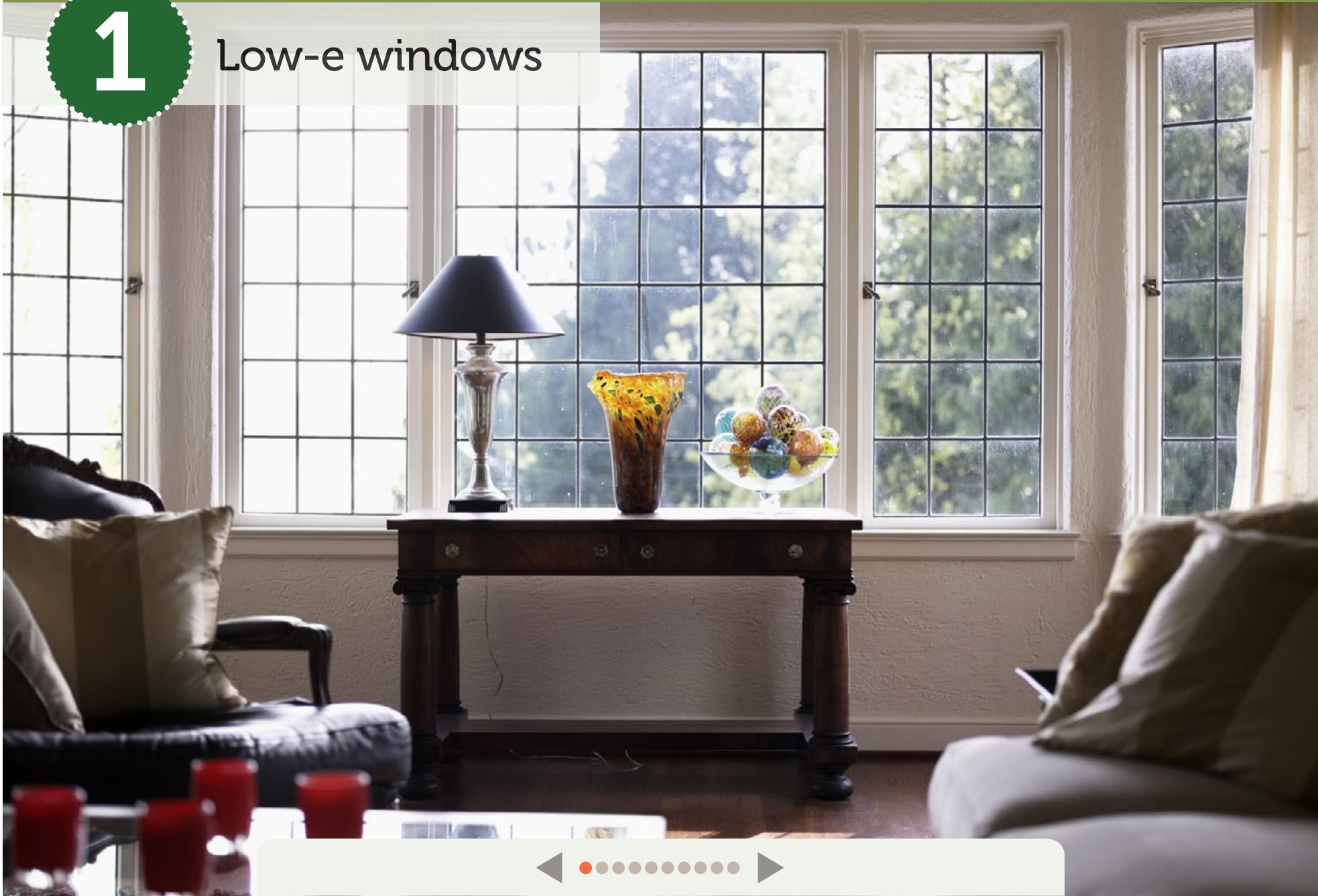
89%	Low-e windows
70%	High efficiency HVAC systems
70%	Programmable thermostats
69%	ENERGY STAR appliances
65%	Argon gas windows
62%	Moisture control measures to enhance durability
62%	Ceiling fans
62%	Water conserving faucets and fixtures
59%	Improving the home’s thermal envelope
53%	Duct systems designed to minimize leakage



For remodelers and builders who aren't already incorporating these common green practices, here are a few design tips to get started:

1

Low-e windows



RYAN MCVAY/DIGITAL VISION/THINKSTOCK

For clients that want homes bursting with windows, remodelers can increase energy-efficiency and reduce energy costs by installing low-e windows without compromising the view. In warmer climates, the windows' reflective coating should face the outside to keep out the sun's heat; in cooler areas, their reflective coating should face the interior to keep heat in.

“As the lines become blurred between green practice and standard design, architects and designers who cannot adapt will be left behind, while early adopters are bound to flourish.”

Builders and remodelers who recognize the financial benefit of investing in the green home building market will turn towards designers who possess a highly honed green skill set and who are trained and certified in the latest codes, such as the ICC 700 National Green Building Standard. As the lines become blurred between green practice and standard design, architects and designers who cannot adapt will be left behind, while those early adopters are bound to flourish. What's more, the numbers in favor of green practices are only increasing, countering the notion that green building is merely a fad. 🏡

Alexandra Isham is a student at American University and was a Summer 2014 Intern at NAHB in the Sustainability & Green Building department.



The Thrills and Spills of Mullions, Muntins and Window Grilles

Todd Hallett, AIA, CAPS

When I first approached the topic of window mullions and muntins for Best in American Living's "It's All in the Details," I decided to submerge myself in window history.

It started out great. I was reading about pre-16th-century mullions that were primarily carved out of stone, how large windows were subdivided into smaller openings by vertical muntins of timber... and then I got hungry. I went to my modern day fridge and made a sandwich. Eager to get back, I learned how crowned glass was introduced in 1674 and this led to cross-casement windows.

It sure was quiet, though—a little background music was in order. I grabbed my I-pod. Less eager now, I dug further in and discovered that in the 18th-century mullions started to be made out of pine.

It must have been at this point that I nodded off. When I awoke it was clear: Window history is brutally boring. I moved on to thinking about how we can use information about mullions and muntins in today's world to help our businesses.

As Joan Rivers would say, "Can we talk?" Mullions and muntins? Can it get

any more confusing than that? Both customers and builders alike constantly mix up these terms. In fact, they are misconstrued so often that most people avoid using them like I avoid broccoli. Most have no name for mullions at all, and call muntins grids, grilles, and even bars. A quick definition:

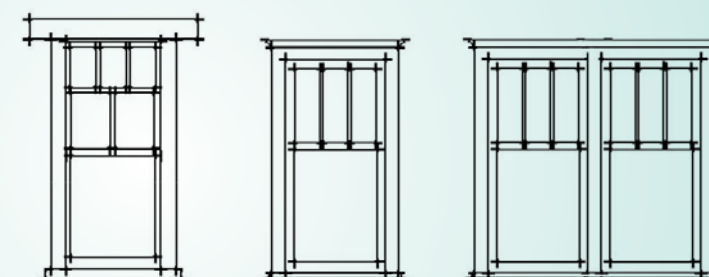
Mullions are the vertical bars that separate two or more windows.

Muntins can be vertical, horizontal, or both, and they appear to divide the glass that makes up the window. Fun fact: Many window manufacturers have given up calling them muntins and now call them grilles instead.

So why do we care? Here's why: There are very specific mullion and muntin patterns that relate to various architectural styles. For builders and architects, window styles and patterns have become very important. If the goal is to make the home appear to be as authentic as possible (given budget and modern material use), then the lowly muntin plays a key role. Here's a look at some

CRAFTSMAN »

The windows are typically double- or single-hung style, often leaving the bottom pane clear of muntins and have several variations on the top pane.



designs that relate to architectural style:

Of course this is just a small sample. I could discuss many more architectural styles and patterns, but those listed above establish a base.

Are these rules strictly followed? Not always. Often builders and architects break the rules—with differing results. Also, when an amazing view is involved, say a lake or mountain range, the muntin rules are, well, thrown out the window in favor of unobstructed beauty. Other times builders will remove muntins on the sides and rear of the home to reduce cost. But they should keep the side muntins when a front room includes windows on the

sides. It looks odd to have grilles on one side of the room but not the other.

Paying attention to the details is half the battle of designing great homes. So consider your muntin and mullion patterns. Not only will it help your house look great, it will go a long way to giving your project style and a sense of authenticity. 🏠

Todd Hallett, AIA, CAPS, is President and Founder of TK Design & Associates.

