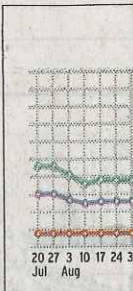


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Parade of Homes traces building trends



For high-end homes, trends include more glass-front cabinets, with interior lighting, over-cabinet lighting, built-in trashcans and recycling centers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF COLORFUL CONCEPTS INTERIOR DESIGN AND RAY STRAWBRIDGE/STRAWBRIDGEPHOTO.COM

CONTRIBUTED REPORT FROM
HBA RALEIGH-WAKE COUNTY

Home builders have always responded to what the home buyers want, and this year is no different. As Wake County celebrates its 46th year for the Parade of Homes, hosted by the Home Builders Association of Raleigh-Wake County, builders will showcase new homes featuring the latest in color, design and layout.

"Because of the market, everyone is cautious," said Jim Prewitt, owner of Prewitt Custom Homes Inc. and 2011 Parade of Homes committee member. "As a result, the average size of a house has decreased and new homes don't have as much detail molding and trim work."

In response to consumers, some builders are downsizing their homes, but at the same time, they are adding more functionality into a smaller space. When it comes to features like a pool or home theater, a lot of buyers are holding off and saving these for

future projects over the next few years.

"Home buyers have become more educated on the ways they want to use the spaces and rooms inside their home," Prewitt said. "In addition, spaces have become less formal throughout new homes."

He explained that most buyers want open floor plans and there is still a focus on kitchens, master baths and large family rooms. There is also a desire for multi-purpose spaces — or a room that can serve either as a library, dining room, office, creative hobby room, etc.

"While half of new home buyers want an office, their first preference is for some type of bonus room that could be used to serve one function for a few years, and then later serve a different purpose as the owners' needs change," said Prewitt.

When it comes to the interior design of a house, homeowners want their living space to have a clean, simplified look, which translates to less carpeting, softer color palettes

and more simple patterns in tile throughout the home.

"Builders are in a precarious position these days when it comes to which design elements they should offer as a standard part of a home package, and which they should offer as an upgrade," said Sally Williams, owner of Colorful Concepts Interior Design and 2011 Parade of Homes committee member.

Williams said the kitchen in new homes is definitely the focal point of added "standard" features like granite countertops, tiled backsplashes, and under-cabinet lighting. Also, the kitchen remains the center of the home and the place where the majority of activity takes place.

"Homeowners want to maximize storage and efficiency in the kitchen," Williams said. "They want more storage in the bathrooms, too. For example, cabinetry or furniture vanities are more desired in the powder rooms, as opposed to a simple pedestal sink."

For high-end homes, some of the trends include more glass-front cabinets, with interior lighting, over cabinet lighting, built-in trashcans and recycling centers. Williams

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SALLY WILLIAMS

COLORFUL CONCEPTS INTERIOR DESIGN

said that homeowners also want more natural lighting, therefore larger windows.

"Desks in the kitchen are out," said Wil-

SEE PAST, PAGE 9D

PAST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8D

liams. "This is valuable kitchen counter and storage space, and while people may still use their computers in the kitchen, there's not a call for this dedicated space."

Along with the lack of formality, there is an increase in open shelving throughout the home. Items are no longer hidden behind a cabinet door, and instead displayed on shelves to complement the overall interior design of a space.

"Homeowners want their homes to be energy-efficient and green too," said Chip Johnson of Audio Advice. "The trend is toward energy management where you control your home's lighting, shade and temperature from your Smartphone. Plus, all your music is right there on your Smartphone, too."

Although consumers are not putting in the full home theaters, they are adding whole house high resolution digital audio that is better than CD quality and sound.

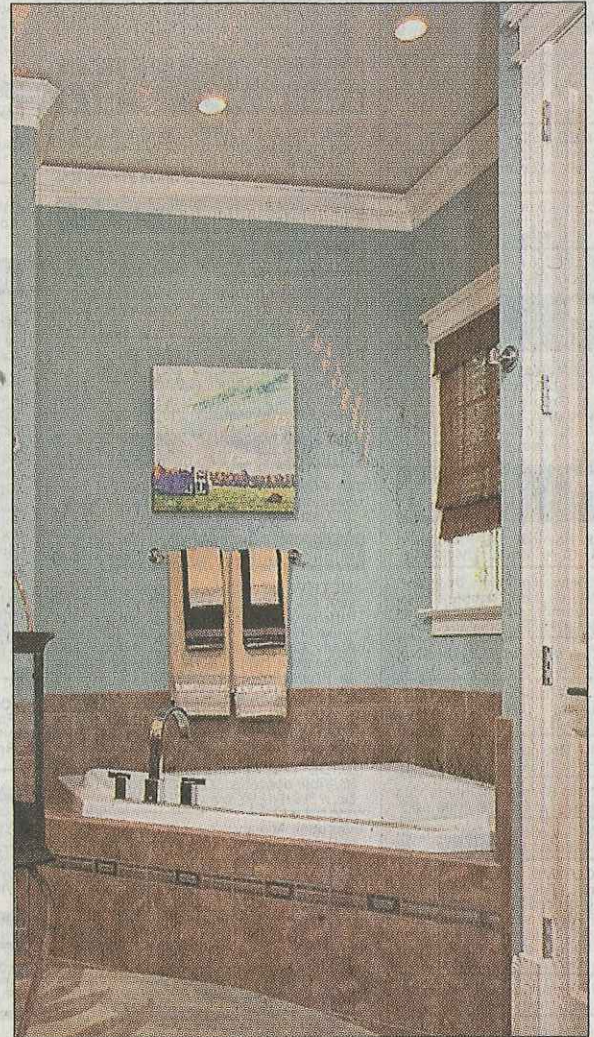
"As this trends increases, home automation will be every-man affordable," said Johnson.

Today builders have to keep in mind that there are certain upgrades and design features that a new home buyer is going to expect.

Williams said, "New homeowners are not interested in what is the latest trend these days, but they want to design their home so that it's current, reflects their personality, and is yet as timeless as it can be."

Interior design choices like the soft blue-green wall color in the bathroom is courtesy of Colorful Concepts Interior Design.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RAY STRAWBRIDGE/STRAWBRIDGEPHOTO.COM



Terrific small trees

Fall is an excellent time to plant small trees. Here are some top choices:

■ Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is a beautiful tree for southern gardens, with white or pink flowers in spring and bright red berries in fall.

■ Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*) has masses of yellow flowers in spring and grows in sun or part shade.

■ Fringe tree (*Chioanthus virginicus*) is covered with delicate, thread-like white flowers in early summer; it is very pretty planted in groves.

■ Crabapple (*Malus*) trees are hardy and adaptable. They are known for their copious spring bloom; flowers may be white, pink, red or deep magenta. Look for new disease-resistant varieties.

■ Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and whitebud (*C. canadensis Alba*) are tough trees with innumerable tiny flowers all along the branches in spring. Most have bright yellow fall foliage.

■ Japanese maple: These are handsomely sculptural little trees with beautiful, usually intricately incised leaves. Many Japanese maples have magnificent fall color. Check the mature size before you plant; not all Japanese maples are small in stature.

■ Crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*): These warm-climate trees bloom for two months or more in summer. The

pale, smooth, exfoliating trunks are pretty year-round. Look for new cultivars for colder climates.

■ Chaste tree (*Vitex*) has silvery gray-green leaves and beautiful blue flower spikes in summer. It can be pruned hard to maintain a small stature.

■ Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) has white flowers in spring, dark red or blue berries in summer, and fiery red fall foliage. It often grows as a multi-trunk specimen.

■ Sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*) grows slowly to about 20 feet; Henry Hicks is an evergreen cultivar recommended for colder climates.

■ Many deciduous magnolias (*M. soulangeana*, the so-called tulip magnolias) grow to be quite large trees. They bloom in spring; Ann and Jane are smaller cultivars in the group known as the "little girls."

Sources: Fairweather Gardens, fairweathergardens.com; Forest Farm, www.forestfarm.com

