

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

KITCHEN DESIGN TRENDS

Even as homebuyers look to downsize their homes, kitchens are taking up a larger percentage of the overall floor plan. Once-popular home theaters and dining rooms are making way for larger kitchens, according to design experts with General Electric.

"The kitchen has become the new living space, and it's expanding in both size and comfort to accommodate everyday life and entertaining," says Marc Hottenroth, manager of GE Appliance's Industrial Design Organization. "The attention to detail that once went into the selection of the leather sofa, plasma TV and Oriental rug in the family room is now going into the selection of appliances, countertops and accent lighting."

Kitchen islands and dedicated work spaces for special hobbies, such as wine tasting or baking, continue to grow in popularity. Homeowners are creating custom work spaces with under-counter refrigerator drawers and wine refrigerators.

For busy families that want faster cooking and easier clean-up, induction cooktop stoves are a popular choice. Induction cooktop stoves boil water faster than gas or electric cooktops, and spills are easier to clean because they don't cook onto the stovetop.

Stainless steel is still the finish of choice for appliances, but homeowners also are choosing more energy-efficient models. Another design trend for 2010 is the creative use of lighting, such as combining overhead can lighting with accent lights to highlight design elements.

Whether it's adding a custom work space, highlighting design elements with light or creating comfortable living spaces within the kitchen, homeowners are finding creative ways to design the kitchen to suit their day-to-day needs.



HOME BUYER MUST-HAVES, TURNOFFS

When shopping for a new home, homebuyers tend to look for space, and lots of it. According to a May 2010 survey by ZipRealty, a garage or parking space is the most sought-after home feature, followed by a master suite, ample storage space, walk-in closets and a guest bedroom. A home located on a quiet cul-de-sac is more likely to appeal to families, while a location on a busy street may be a turnoff. Other buyer turnoffs are structural damage, bad odors, and an awkward floor plan.

The top ten most sought-after home features are:

1. Garage or parking space
2. Master suite
3. Ample storage space
4. Large or walk-in closets
5. Guest bedroom
6. Outdoor entertainment area
7. Gourmet or updated kitchen
8. Breakfast room or eat-in kitchen
9. Large yard
10. Wood floors

Source: ZipRealty



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About two-thirds of U.S. homes (65 percent) currently have central air-conditioning and another 21 percent have window units. By contrast, only 17 percent of U.S. homes had central A/C in 1973.

Source: 2009 American Housing Survey



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