

ROCKIN'

kitchen & bathroom design

Hit the Bull's-Eye on the Two Most Important Rooms in Your Home

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Photo courtesy of Central Kitchen & Bath

Kitchens and master bathrooms are two of the most important rooms in a home and they are also the top two rooms most likely to be remodeled. In new home sales, these two spaces can make or break a sale. Aim for the bull's-eye to focus in on the design of these spaces to make them exceptional and to add lasting value to your home.

When designing these spaces, first consider that changes in the economy have resulted in new trends in homebuyer preferences for smaller, smarter floor plans. Recent new homebuyer surveys reveal that buyers prefer the quality of space (and features) to quantity. It's imperative to design your kitchens and bathrooms to maximize their functionality and comfort while minimizing wasteful space or incurring unnecessary cost.

Kitchen and bathrooms are known as "wet" areas due to extra installations such as plumbing, toilets, sinks, showers and the durable surfaces like tile and countertops which can make them the most cost-prohibitive rooms in the house. Spend your construction dollars wisely by starting with a great kitchen and bath design.

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what buyers want

There are some differences in desires between custom homebuyers (or homeowners with plans to remodel) and production homebuyers:

- Custom homebuyers and homeowners who want to remodel their current home desire bigger kitchens, high-end appliances, custom finishes, etc.
- Baby Boomers will account for a larger percentage of buyers and they look for larger kitchens too; but universal aging-in-place features for functionality and maneuverability are at the top of their list.
- New home (production) buyers are driven to purchase by low cost but high value in new homes. They are choosing “right-size” floor plans, which make the best use of floor space. Special, efficient design consideration has to be given to these kitchen and bathroom spaces.
- Generation Y buyers are also driving new home sales at lower home prices. These buyers are more practical and environmentally-minded and look for energy efficient features.



Photo courtesy of Central Kitchen & Bath

Homebuyers looking to remodel desire bigger kitchens and a high level of finishes



IKEA right-size kitchen design and space-saving elements

KITCHENS

Designing Today's Kitchens

Right-sizing a floor plan includes eliminating wasted space, unnecessary cabinets and unused countertops. Despite the smaller floor plan sizes, kitchens, along with family rooms, are actually getting larger. Use a rule-of-thumb to size the kitchen an average of 10-12% of the overall area of the house, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Economics and Housing Policy (2007). According to the same report, new homes are LEAST likely to include a butler's pantry or a desk in the kitchen.

Planning Today's Kitchen

- The kitchen has always been the heart of the home - place it in a central location combined with the family room and one everyday eating area. Buyers prefer everyday eating areas over seldom-used formal dining rooms.
- The kitchen has also become the social center for friends and family. Buyers are asking for kitchens where family and friends can congregate comfortably.
- With the downturn in the economy, more families are cooking at home rather than eating out. Kitchen layouts are more carefully scrutinized for convenience and multiple cooks, so plan accordingly.
- Smaller kitchens have to be designed to be more efficient. According to a Better Homes and Gardens Consumer Preferences 2010 survey, 66% of respondents want efficient kitchen and bathroom design.
- Remember the work triangle - all three sides should add up to a maximum of 26'. Today's kitchens are using “work zones,” or work areas designed for food storage, cleaning, cooking, food preparation, etc.
- Place the stove so it is no more than a couple of steps away from the sink (for pots that require to be filled with water). If a layout has the stove far from the sink, consider a vegetable sink or pot fillers above the stove.
- Buyers desire a partially separated kitchen, but it must be visually open to the family room. New home design trends show kitchens open to the outdoors with more windows for plenty of natural light.
- According to the NAHB Economics and Housing Policy Group, 80% of buyers prefer island work areas. Keep islands no farther than 48” from the opposing countertops so they are not more than two or three steps away from each other, but maintain a minimum distance of 42” in work areas so there is enough room for two people to work.
- Bar tops need to be a minimum of 16” deep for a place setting.

Finishes & Countertops

Some of the more popular color choices for today's kitchens include lighter woods or white cabinets, bamboo floors and eliminated backsplashes. Backsplashes are being replaced with integral wall finishes of recycled glass, stone or a combination of both between the countertop and the bottom of the wall cabinets. Granite and quartz surfaces still dominate for countertop surfaces; there seems to be some buyer interest in recycled glass, but it can still be cost prohibitive.

Base Cabinets

- Squat-and-reach base cabinet doors are trending out; base cabinet drawers have better storage capacity, they are easier to open and they are considered aging-in-place conveniences. Existing base cabinets can be retrofitted with roll-out shelves.
- Base cabinets have handy features like cutting boards designed to open like drawers.
- Gourmet cooks require extra storage. Offer larger kitchens with pot and pan drawers for these buyers.
- Aging-in-place accessibility should allow knee space under the sink and under the cook top.



Wall Cabinets

Tall upper cabinets (42") are still preferred by today's buyers, but they can be costly and hard to reach the upper shelf. Some can be replaced with inexpensive stainless steel shelves for easy retrieval while creating a modern design statement. Wall cabinets can be replaced or combined with other useful features:

- Spice racks
- Magnetic cooking utensil racks
- Show cabinets (replace one or two cabinet doors with glass doors as show cabinets)
- Open shelves
- Cookbook shelves
- Open plate racks
- Windows

Garbage/Recycling

Pull-out waste containers - one for garbage and the other for recycling - are standard items in today's kitchens.



Appliances

- The latest appliances are more energy and water efficient than ever before, like Whirlpool's Eco Kitchen line of appliances.
- Newer dishwashers are also more energy and water efficient and ultra-quiet. Whirlpool and KitchenAid report that their double-drawer dishwashers are popular sellers.
- Save countertop space by keeping the microwave oven off the counter. One idea is to put it above the stove, but some complain that it's too high to



reach. Below-counter microwave drawers or microwaves built into base cabinets offer kids and aging adults easy access.

Pantries

- Walk-in pantries are preferred in larger homes with bigger kitchens.
- Families who are cooking at home instead of eating out require larger pantries to store bulk food bought at warehouse clubs.
- Walk-In pantry organizers can include glide-out pantry drawers, which provide better storage solutions than typical wire shelves.
- Space-saving pantry towers are new - these single piece, full height cabinets combine storage into one smart space that results in longer, more usable lengths of countertops.



Lighting

- Newer kitchen designs include many windows that bring in daylight as well as open the kitchen to the outdoors. Homes with taller ceilings can also bring daylight in with transom windows between the ceiling and the tops of the wall cabinets.
- Good lighting may not always be achieved with recessed can lights in tall ceilings. Mount adjustable bulb lights 12" from the face of the cabinets to illuminate the cabinets and direct light onto the countertops.
- A light source cast from behind you may shadow the work surface on the countertops. Consider track lighting that directs lighting onto countertops. Lights mounted underneath the wall cabinets are an efficient alternative for lighting as well.
- A bright accent light can highlight nice finishes like stainless steel and granite countertops. Fluorescent bulb lighting fixtures are best for ambient light to illuminate the kitchen adequately.
- Rope lights can be inexpensive night lights under toe kicks.



NanaWall Grand Transformations

COOL KITCHEN EXTRAS

- Cappuccino and Espresso machines
- Wine coolers
- Warming drawers
- Stoves with a grill feature
- Recipe book shelves instead of a recipe desk
- Under-counter small screen TVs
- Hands-free faucets
- Easy-open appliances

BATHROOMS

Planning Today's Bathrooms

In the master bathroom, trends are moving toward sensible and practical design – designing needs over luxurious wants. Buyers are willing to exchange the features they don't need with features they do need, but expect them to be of better quality.

- Seldom-used soaking tubs (and also those with bubble jets) are becoming less popular in production homes where price and right-sized spaces rule. Buyers are less interested in tubs as a token for resale value and would rather trade them in for a larger shower.
- Showers have progressed to be larger and are usually open, walk-around showers without a glass door. Larger means 42"-48" wide and at least 6' long. Where glass enclosures are necessary, frameless glass is preferred.
- Buyers still see the master bathroom as a retreat; they envision a spa-like experience and show great interest in programmable temperature-controlled, multiple shower heads and multi-jet body sprays like Kohler's Body Spa Systems.
- Buyers still prefer both his-and-hers vanities, but at a 36" height instead of 32".
- Private, enclosed water closets for the toilet are still desired, but they should be long enough to swing the door in. If they are less than 6', the door should swing out.
- Bathrooms now include televisions so owners can watch the morning news while getting ready for work.
- Like kitchens, ample natural light is preferred, but be mindful where windows are placed to still provide the appropriate privacy needed in the bathroom.
- Popular flooring choices in the master bathrooms include recycled laminate and rectangular floor tiles, which have become more popular than square.
- Buyers seek water-saving features like hands-free faucets, low flow showerheads and dual-flush toilets.
- Linen and towel closets are a necessity and should be adequately sized.
- Design the master bathroom with easy access to dressing areas.

Secondary Bathrooms

- Smaller floor plans may require that the normal two secondary bathrooms may need to be cut back to one. In plans where multiple bedrooms share one bathroom, consider a Jack and Jill bathroom with two sinks and a private toilet/shower area.
- Include closets or cabinets for towel and toilet tissue storage.

Powder or Half Bathrooms

Locate guest bathrooms close to entertaining areas, but make them private and don't neglect sound privacy. In order to provide the sound privacy needed, provide sound transmission class (STC) rated walls of 45 or higher with solid core doors.

Some guest bathrooms have loud ventilation fans, which guests tend to use to their advantage as white noise if sound privacy is not provided. If the walls and door are properly insulated for sound, then consider whisper-quiet fans of 1.0 sones or less in your guest bathroom design.

Energy and design efficiency seem to be the main focus in today's kitchen and bathroom designs. In large homes or small, sensible and practical design is now the rule over the splurge of large unused spaces and unnecessary extras that do not add value to the homeowner's everyday living.

Kitchens and bathrooms can still feel big if they are designed right. There are many rapid changes happening in home design right now. Stay ahead of the curve and design your kitchens and bathrooms using your dollars wisely.

about our firm

Canin Associates believes great ideas and great placemaking merge when connections are made to the regional context, vernacular architecture and the cultural heritage of a region. Our 24-person, 29-year old interdisciplinary firm of idea-based professionals is committed to creating sustainable resort and mixed-use communities that enrich the quality of life and are wonderful places to live, work or visit.

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