

Walt Danley Realty

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WHAT'S TRENDING NOW

Look closely at homes today, and almost every aspect seems different compared to only five or 10 years ago. And the changes go beyond aesthetics.

Written by: Camilla McLaughlin

Photos Courtesy of Desert Star Construction, Est Est and PHX Architecture

Talk trends with designers and architects and the conversation likely includes a mention of the recession, which illustrates how fundamental the downturn was to new consumer values that today spill over to house and home. “Since the recession, what we’re seeing is: lighter, brighter, more open, more about lifestyle and more human scale, and cleaner lines,” says Erik Peterson, principal of PHX Architecture, who expects these trends to continue next year.



FUNCTION TRUMPS SIZE

The jury is still out on home sizes, but consumers are looking at square footage and space differently. Peterson explains: “Part of that is people have gotten smarter in saying exactly what they need to live. They realize they don’t need these extra rooms that they only use once in a while and they’ve gotten smarter about how they spend their money. Now they are saying, ‘This is what we need to live in; this is what is comfortable for us and we are just going to be real about it.’”

“People are not as afraid to be more creative with how they utilize the square footage in their homes. There is much more flexibility in how spaces are used,” observes Tony Sutton, president of interior design firm Est Est Inc.

“Design trends today are about layout, space usage, wide open spaces, large rooms, white, bright. That is all becoming a mainstay in terms of the design of homes right now. Traditionally, a house will have 18 to 20 percent of the livable square footage as hallways, but now people are just going through rooms rather than having hallways which creates a nice flow,” shares Jerry Meek, president of Desert Start Construction.

MODERN, ON THE RISE

Contemporary has become a major influence, which in the design world is a big change. Historically in Arizona, contemporary accounted for only a small portion, maybe 10 percent, of new construction. Now that num-

ber is well over half according to Sutton. “Everything is trending with a very contemporary flavor,” he says, even traditional themes such as French Country.

But don't expect to see the stark interiors typically associated with modernism. Instead, today's contemporary is warmer, softer and more transitional, a bridge between traditional and modern. It's an on-going change that in recent years has tipped even more toward contemporary.

Finishes, from trim to materials, are more detailed, of a higher quality and give each space a distinct persona and feeling. They are, Meek says, becoming “more like a jewel box.” In fact today, beyond a certain price point it's rare to see a ceiling without some type of a unique treatment.

NEUTRALS RULE, ALMOST

Grey and putty dominate color overall, and expectations for 2016 are that lighter, softer hues will continue to be important. These preferences, according to Jackie Jordan, director of color marketing at Sherwin Williams, reflect a desire to “disconnect from the chaos of life.” But jewel box tones are also part of the 2016 palette. So look for deeper colors in plums, blues, pinks, all sorts of greys and hints of metallic. Colors are saturated but not bright. Even the most intense hues appear subdued.

Open concept spaces continue to be central but today's design story is also about how these public areas intersect and connect. “What's next to the space is super important,” says Meek. For example, what matters for kitchens is how they connect to general entertaining spaces and also to those outside.

“Kitchens literally are the heart of the home” where almost everything occurs from the business of managing the home to dining to entertaining, says Peterson. And, yes, cooking goes on there too. Most upscale homes include something behind the scenes, such as a tricked out pantry or small second area for caterers, to facilitate entertaining. Two islands are almost standard. This year, transitional outpaced traditional as the preferred design style among kitchen designers. Looking ahead, expect to see a mix of finishes and even some color.

Today's focus on kitchens also goes back to all the qualities of hearth and home that pull on our heartstrings, and that's one aspect of homes that seems impervious to change.





WHAT'S TRENDING NOW

Outdoor living “It’s one of the key elements we see improving,” says Jerry. These areas are more orchestrated and finely tuned to extend living spaces outdoors. Sometimes it’s even hard to tell where the interior ends and the outside begins. Expect even more features and furnishings akin to interiors. Sparks from fire amenities continue.

Authenticity Surrounded by the virtual, we all crave what is real. Nothing creates character and brings instant context than reclaimed materials. Reclaimed wood, stones, bricks, mantles will continue to top consumer wish lists.

Porcelain tile “There is a very significant leaning toward hard surfaces,” says Sutton. New manufacturing techniques enable porcelain to mimic all sorts of surfaces from Carrera marble to various woods to leather. The result is so authentic you have to touch to be sure. Unlike natural materials staining and moisture are not issues and they can be manufactured in large formats.

Wood floors Here too changes have been equally dramatic. “Engineered wood has taken over the industry,” says Sutton pointing out that even reclaimed woods have an engineered version. The quality is superior to earlier iterations and “they literally last to the next generation.”

Artful pools Located closer to the interior, pools have become as much a design element as they are a place to play. An added bonus is the cooling effect on the surrounding air.

Wine cellars as a design element Glass walls and new display techniques have taken wine cellars out of the basement and into main living areas. ❖
