



Changes Foreseen for the Home of the Future

(Editor's Note: The following information has been taken in part from www.nbnnews.com, February 26, 2007)

The pace of change in the American home is expected to accelerate dramatically in the next several years according to 60 NAHB interviews with some 500 architects, designers, manufacturers and marketing experts asking them about what they expect to be prevalent in average and upscale homes in 2015.

The big news is that single-family homes are expected to end the growth spurt in square footage that has persisted, with some cyclical interruptions, since 1973. "We don't think the size will rise anymore," states Gopal Ahluwalia, National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB) vice president for research. The high cost of housing has forced consumers to start making trade-offs, and higher quality is trumping additional space, Ahluwalia said. New single-family homes that were completed during the first three quarters of 2006 had floor areas averaging 2,459 sq. ft., he said, up from about 1,500 sq. ft. in 1973. The consensus of those polled by NAHB was that home size would slip into the 2,300 sq. ft. range by 2015. What they have been losing in square footage, however, home buyers have been getting back in volume, and higher ceilings are here to stay, according to the survey findings.

Getting steadily higher over the course of the past 10 years, ceilings on the first floor of the average home are expected to be mostly 9'-0" with some as high as 10'-0." For luxury homes, a 10'-0" ceiling will be standard on the entry level but ranging up to 12'-0," and a 9'-0" ceiling will be standard on the second floor.

Forty percent of those participating in the research study said they expected changes in homes to be more significant in the next decade than they were the past 10 years, and 41% indicated they expected them to be about the same. Issues cited as bringing about change were accessibility for the aging baby-boom population, technological advancement, green construction materials, and environmental concerns.

The experts said that 65% of average homes and 56% of upscale homes (defined as those with at least 4,000 sq. ft.) would be two stories or more. According to census data, 55% of the homes built in 2005 had two or more stories. Noting that two-story construction is less expensive than one-story on a square-foot basis, Ahluwalia commented that "as housing prices go up, the share of the two-story home goes up."

The room in the average house most likely to gain in its share of square footage is the family room, according to 67% of the respondents. In the upscale home, 72% said the family room was on the rise, and 68% identified the kitchen.

Other findings from the "Home of the Future" study:

Ranking items or features that would be important in the average home in the next 10 years, participants identified the family room (90%), low-maintenance exteriors (83%), designs (78%), the location of the home (75%) and two-car garages (73%). For upscale homes, design was the most important (98%), followed by the family room (97%), home location (96%), home office (94%) and security (93%).

Participants noted several trends in green building for the average home: an increased demand for energy-efficient appliances and mechanical equipment (98%), greater use of water or energy conserving devices (89%), energy-efficient windows (89%), more green and sustainable products (75%), and builders seeking green certification (66%).

