



New homes are getting smaller

By METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

From the early 1990s to the beginning of this century, “bigger is better” certainly was the mantra of the home-building industry. All across North America buyers could browse among home developments boasting homes of 3,000 square feet or larger and multiple bedrooms and bathrooms. But according to new data, home buyers are seeking less space today but more in green amenities.

Research by the Canadian Home Builders’ Association has found that many people now desire smaller homes with multipurpose rooms and energy saving features. They’re not ready to trade in their two- and three-car garages just yet, though. Plus, a survey of International Furnishings and Design Association members forecasts that McMansions will become a thing of the past and more emphasis will be placed on smaller, more eco-friendly homes. Family rooms will grow

larger, as will kitchens. Other rooms in the home will disappear, including the living room.

Many homeowners and potential home buyers realize that with girth comes a cost. In today’s fragile economy, the ability to cash in on the dream of homeownership may come at the compromise of a smaller, better-planned home.

According to Tim Bailey, the manager of Avid Canada, a research and consulting firm for the building industry, “While many consumers are willing to forgo space, they are not equating this with having to forfeit functionality. Design creativity is requisite to adapt to this changing preference.”

Here are some things that you will and will not find in newer homes moving forward.

- The dining room is becoming extinct, with larger, eat-in-kitchen/entertaining spaces the norm. The kitchen will be the main room of the home and be renamed the

“kitchen lounge.”

- Separate rooms are evolving into spaces that serve many different purposes.

- Although the sizes of bathrooms may be scaled back, the amenities will not. Spa-style bathrooms with luxurious products, high-tech features and televisions will be on the rise.

- The master bedroom suite may not shrink in size, but it could be combined to form a home office and exercise space.

- Expect to see more high-tech offerings, such as voice- or motion-activation devices in the home. Lighting, entertainment gear, heating/cooling systems, and even blinds could be hooked up to a master control system.

- Thanks to an increasing number of people working from home, the presence of a dedicated home office is a given in newer homes. Nearly 40 percent of industry forecasters say that they expect one in every home.

- Home storage solutions will also be a vital component of new homes. Builders will create clever solutions for mixing storage into more compact spaces.

- With aging Baby Boomers comprising a larger segment of home buyers, expect to see more one-level homes, or at least homes where there is a master suite and the majority of the living space on the first level.

Part of what is driving this trend is the cost of homes in relation to space and the increased interest in environmental conservation. Smaller, more efficient homes require less in terms of heating and cooling energy. They need less furniture, and new materials made from sustainable products help further fuel green initiatives in the building industry. Energy efficient homes are a main priority for buyers. Although the homes may be smaller, they will not be minuscule. And home buyers can expect a host of amenities that will make the smaller size of homes barely perceptible.