



Preferences in Housing for the New Millennium

Picture the home of the future. Do you see a Jetson's-style space needle model plopped on top of a chrome-plated pillar? Housing, like all things, changes with time. Consumers want homes that accommodate their lifestyles. And the pace at which we live has definitely gained momentum in the past decade. So how will housing evolve?

What will the housing of the new millennium look like? Some housing experts predict it will appear surprisingly un-futuristic. Homebuyers won't rush the market to purchase round, metallic-plated homes. For the last couple centuries, builders have constructed homes that are variations on several basic architectural themes. Many of us will probably continue to live in colonial, Greek revival and ranch style homes. And a few might live like kings in homes with enclosed courtyards and castle-like towers. Just like clothing, most housing styles eventually come back in vogue - even if it takes several centuries.

Size proportions in millennium housing will shift. For the past decade, common areas such as family rooms and kitchens have expanded at a steady pace. Housing experts predict this trend has staying power. The home's 'public' spaces will keep growing whereas 'private' spaces, such as bedrooms and baths, will shrink.

Some housing industry experts predict that 21st century homes will function as digitally controlled, robotic servants, catering to the homeowner's every want and need. How would you like a kitchen cupboard that noticed when the Frosted Flakes were gone and called in a restock order to a supermarket that delivers? And solar panels may shrink in size until they resemble shingle-like roof tiles.

Even if they can't have computerized kitchen cabinets, homebuyers will still want convenience. The average American home will come stocked with amenities. Housing experts can't predict exactly what convenience item will become commonplace in new homes. Fifty years ago, who would have guessed that every new home would one day come with a dishwasher? But they can make guesses by looking at current amenities featured in most new homes or reading surveys that ask homebuyers what features they consider essential.

According to a new study performed by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and Fulton Research in conjunction with Home Guides of America, today's homebuyers want:

- At least one fireplace.
- Central Air Conditioning. Eighty-three percent of respondents to the "What Today's Home Buyers Want" survey wanted central air conditioning in their home.
- High ceilings. Some homebuyers want ceilings as high as 11 feet. First-floor ceilings in homes built ten years ago average 8 feet.
- Home offices. Homebuyers want bigger and better-wired home offices.
- Open space.
- Larger kitchens. Homebuyers want more counter space, table space, central islands, walk-in pantries and double sinks.

- More bathrooms. Thirty years ago, the average home had 1.5 baths. Today it has 2.5 to 3. Homes built in the 21st century should come with plenty of bathrooms. Buyers want linen closets, exhaust fans, separate shower enclosures, whirlpool tubs, water temperature controls, dressing/make-up areas and private toilet compartment in their baths.
- Two stories. Increasingly over the past two decades, homebuyers have shifted toward a preference for two-story homes. In 1971, only 17 percent of new homes built had two stories. By 1995, 48 percent of new homes built had two stories.
- High-tech security systems.
- Media rooms.
- Two or three car garages.
- Sun rooms.
- Exercise rooms.
- Laundry rooms.
- Communications ports. Upgraded and improved wiring systems provide better access to the Internet and cable TV stations.
- Multi-purpose rooms. In some homes, the traditional kitchen and family rooms will melt into one larger, new, multi-purpose room, either divided by a half wall or left completely open.
- More storage space. In some bedrooms, closets will cover an entire wall. Most master bedrooms will include his and her walk-in closets.
- Energy management systems.
- Lighting controls.

New homes built in the twenty-first century will suit individual lifestyles, providing havens in which homeowners can live comfortable and convenient lives. And again we will wonder, as a new amenity becomes commonplace in the average home, "how did we ever live without it?"

*** Side Bar — Composite Home Sketch***

Composite Home (Based on Home Shoppers' Preferences)

- Single family detached, two-story with basement
- Median size: 2,196 sq. ft.
- Bedrooms: 4
- Bathrooms: 2.5
- Parking: 2 car garage
- Extra bedroom: Guest room/Home office
- Master bedroom closet: Walk-in his & hers! Single large walk-in
- Kitchen: large counter space, place for table and chair, double sink; walk-in pantry; island work area; corian counter top

- Bath: white toilet tub & sink; separate shower enclosure; private toilet compartment; linen closet; exhaust fan
- Security system: Internal security system
- Kitchen-family room: visually open, with a half wall completely open
- Specialty areas: laundry near kitchen or bedroom, dining room, home office, den/library; sound proofing
- Double pane windows
- Built-in shelving
- Fireplace in: family room
- Skylights in: bathroom/kitchen
- Bay windows in: living/dining room
- Cathedral ceiling in: living room
- Front exterior material: brick
- Outdoor features: lot with trees, exterior lighting
- Ceiling height: 9 feet on first floor