

Energize Your Buyers with Design Hot Spots

Memorable moments help buyers make an emotional connection with a home. Here's how to facilitate them.

By [Jennifer Goodman](#)



New research shows that home buyers are enticed not just by a new home's look but by its ability to provide "memorable moments" for years to come.

At a Builders' Show educational session, [Grand Rapids](#), Mich., architect Wayne Visbeen told the audience that the design of a home can facilitate these special times. The moments vary by client—some want an expansive kitchen for entertaining or a playroom to keep the kids happy. “The interior space can enhance emotional experiences,” he said.

Sponsored by Napoleon Fireplace, the study released Jan. 10 examines the emotional connections homeowners have with their homes. It found that homeowners associate certain rooms with positive emotions and memories, qualifying those hubs as “hot spots.” What’s more, a room’s ability to evoke positive emotions and memorable moments is directly related to the design and amenities of that room. Features such as fireplaces, high ceilings and built-ins increase the appeal of any room.

“Think about growing up, what were the areas of your home where you can remember having your fondest memories?” Visbeen asked.



Courtesy Napoleon

The study found that the most popular areas of the home are driven by three elements: relaxation, socializing, and function. The more of these three elements a room has, the better. For instance, designers can add socialization space to a kitchen with an island or wet bar or integrate the dining room with the kitchen to make it more functional.

Builders who offer customizable design features in their homes are viewed more favorably by buyers than those who do not, the study found, even when buyers choose not to opt for the upgrade, said co-presenter David Brown, partner at Milwaukee-based marketing and ad agency Hoffman York.

“By offering special design details, customers’ perception of you as a higher-quality builder goes up,” he said. “They realize that you get all these details that make a home truly special, which presents you as a professional who understands what buyers want.”

Visbeen and Brown’s ideas for facilitating the appeal of hot spots include:

--Take the butler’s pantry to a new level by creating space for the microwave, mixer, and other unsightly small appliances and place it close to the kitchen to make it more

functional. “A builder can make more money on a pantry that’s front and center because the buyer is going to put nicer cabinets in, so it’s a nice upgrade,” Brown said.

--Don’t underestimate the importance of the master suite, Visbeen said. Include a “transition space” to make the bedroom feel separate from the master bath and closet. “If one partner is getting ready in the morning and one is sleeping it’s a really nice feature,” he says. Even in smaller homes, builders can include a small vestibule between the closet and the bathroom to make the owners more comfortable.

--Enjoyable moments often occur around a fireplace, so think about adding more of them to a home such as the master bedroom or a firepit at the front entrance.

--Get to know your clients’ design tastes. What one client loves may be a turnoff for another. Visbeen, who admits to having televisions in nearly every room of his house, says he thinks TV are a hot spot but they are not for everyone.

--Think about offering new architectural styles. [South Carolina](#) Low Country design is trending in markets across the country, Visbeen said. This relaxed-but-elegant look is marked by large shade porches, French doors, gables, crown molding.

--Gas and electric fireplaces are preferred by many clients because they are easier to operate and are clean-burning. Long linear fireplaces are ideal for underneath a television.

--Interesting stairs can enhance a home’s appeal. Visbeen says a photo of a unique tiled stairway has gotten more interest on his Houzz page than any other project.

--The mixed metal look is big. Consider using brass, bronze, nickel, and other finishes in the same home.

--Dining rooms are a space waster, according to Visbeen. Instead spec integrated seating in the kitchen with built in booths and expandable tables. If a client wants a separate dining area, “a transom glass window between an island and the dining table makes it feel separate,” he says.