

Creative Living



Monday, November 7, 1988 O&E

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Kitchens key in new home purchases

NEW HOME shoppers enter the marketplace with a vast and varied list of criteria ranging from the number of bedrooms to the dimensions of the family room. When it comes to the kitchen, many people are more impressed by appearances than good design. Flaws are not obvious until after the purchase, when the new owners actually use the room.

"It's ironic that kitchens and baths are the rooms that sell homes, yet many novice home buyers are unaware of what constitutes good kitchen design," said Francis Jones, CKD, executive director of the National Kitchen and Bath Association. "People tend to evaluate a kitchen on looks and newness, as they would a living room or a deck. The big difference is that the kitchen is actually a workshop, where meals are prepared and entertaining is done. A good floor plan is critical to the success of both activities," Jones said.

To help new home buyers evaluate the quality of their kitchens, Jones identified seven key areas that de-

serve special scrutiny.

- **COUNTER SPACE** — The basic requirement is at least 24 inches of space on either side of the sink and 12 to 18 inches on each side of the range. Avoid an isolated refrigerator with no adjacent counter space. The need for "landing space" next to the handle side of the refrigerator is especially important because we usually remove more than one item at a time. Fifteen inches is the minimum recommended amount of counter space.

- **STORAGE** — What's inside a cabinet is as important as what's outside. Storage aids such as slide-out pantries, roll-out drawers, cutlery drawers, tilt-out sink fronts and roll-out trash bins enhance efficiency.

- **PROPER LIGHTING** — The move toward multipurpose kitchens is accompanied by more sophisticated lighting needs. In addition to general overhead lighting is a need for task lighting over the sink and counters.

- **ADEQUATE VENTILATION** — Especially important in "great

room" kitchens, adequate ventilation prevents smoke, grease and odors from circulating through the house. Range hoods may be sufficient to do the job, or additional fans and blowers may be necessary.

- **SAFETY** — Traffic patterns should not interfere with the work triangle. The fewer people who intersect the cook's path, the less chance for an accident to occur. When cross traffic is inevitable, at least the range-to-sink path should be uninterrupted by household traffic, as this is where grease spills, steaming pots and others hazards are most likely to occur.

Other safety considerations should include avoidance of sharp corners on islands, which are usually eye-level with children and hip level with adults. Microwave ovens should be placed no higher than eye level. Any

higher and removal of cooked foods takes place with arms raised above the head, at their weakest point.

- **ADEQUATE CLEARANCE SPACE** — For safety, comfort and efficiency, it's imperative that clearance spaces be allowed for opening the oven, refrigerator, dishwasher and cabinet doors, using the appliances, passing behind seated diners and passing other family members in the kitchen.

For example, for easy access, a dishwasher requires 42 inches from the front of the unit to the surface opposite it. An additional 20 inches of space next to the dishwasher is required for loading and unloading.

A common mistake is to install the unit adjacent to a corner-angled sink or at a right angle to the sink, ignoring the 20-inch requirement. The user cannot stand at the sink or near dish storage to load and unload.

"It's ironic that kitchens and baths are rooms that sell homes, yet many novice buyers are unaware of what constitutes good kitchen design."

— Francis Jones designer

organizing

Dorothy Lehmkuhl

Q. Even though I don't have a business, I sometimes feel I need a secretary with so much mail coming in the door. What shall I do with all these papers?

A. Papers may seem less perplexing if you get back to basics and try my DRAFT system, an acronym for the five things you can do with paper:

D Stands for Delegate (not "Don't know...") The best managers know how to delegate properly, so if you can pass a paper on to someone else for action you will have simplified your life by one step. Place it in a special file for others (your spouse?) to handle.

R is for Read. Reading material merits its own special place — perhaps a bookshelf at the office or near your bed or easy chair at home. Do your casual reading when you feel like it but set aside specific study/career reading times.

A means Action. Set up special folders to hold items like bills to pay, letters to answer, etc.

F is for File. Each item retained for further reference must have a home of its own. Any collection of five or more papers on the same subject merits its own folder. Fewer papers may be stapled together and added to similar material.

T equals Toss. Ask: Is there a good purpose for saving it? What will happen if I throw it out? Do I care? (or does anyone else?) Am I the only one with this information? (or could I retrieve it at the library, for instance?) If answers are negative, pitch it.

Start by sorting your stacks of papers into the five foregoing categories. You will end up with four, since one will already be in the wastebasket. Stack your reading — leaving three; deliver or file your "delegations" — leaving only two remaining categories.

Now do your filing, putting up proper folders as you go. (You may need to purge existing filing space first.)

Finally, divide your action items into priority order, using folders marked "Immediate Action," "Hot" or "Now" for miscellaneous things to do right away, and labeling other folders appropriately for work to be done later.

Papers really aren't difficult to control when you categorize them and make decisions as you come to them.

condo queries

Robert M. Meisner

Q. I am a member of a homeowners association but they appear not to be actively pursuing collection of any assessments nor do they enforce the restrictions contained within the Declaration of Covenants. What can I do?

A. Find out who the directors and/or officers of the association are and write them a letter reminding them of their responsibilities. Tell them that you expect them to adhere to their responsibilities in enforcing the homeowners' association restrictions and bylaws and otherwise collecting assessments from all members timely. Tell them that you expect that everyone in the community will adhere to the restrictions and rules and regulations that this is being done.

Perhaps this action will have a therapeutic effect on the members of the homeowners association. Finally, ask them if they have any directors and officers liability insurance which may send them a message.

Robert M. Meisner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate, corporate law and litigation.



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