

# Baby boomers seek more luxuries in housing

What do today's home buyers really want?

Are their hearts set on rustic little rose-covered country cottages, or do they want high-tech houses where the Jetsons would feel right at home? Are they yearning for simplicity and small spaces, or do they dream of luxury living?

According to a builders' association survey, today's increasingly affluent home owners of the baby boom generation will choose larger homes with more luxury features and bigger lots when they buy their next house. Even if they have to pay more and live farther from work, they will be willing to make those tradeoffs to get the house they want.

A National Association of Home Builders survey cited workmanship and materials — including carpeting, flooring, tiles and paint — as well as the builder's reputation and neighborhood as having to be first-rate. Respondents said if they cannot afford to buy the house they want, they will settle for an expandable with some parts left unfinished. But they will not settle for a smaller house.

More than two-thirds would choose a suburban location and one-fourth a rural location.

Present homeowners want their next house to have about 2,360 square feet — almost 30 percent more than their present house. And even though land costs have increased dramatically in the last two years, consumers want larger yards.

Survey findings reveal these preferences:

- House design: A two-story house with basement (32 percent); a single-story house with basement (24 percent); four bedrooms (about 50 percent); three bedrooms (33 percent); 2½ or more bathrooms (70 percent) and three bathrooms or more (25 percent).

Family room: Home buyers want a family room, not a den or study. A family room/kitchen is desirable.

Kitchen: The idea is a large, well-equipped kitchen with a walk-in pantry, a built-in microwave, a special use storage space, a double sink, an island eating space and a bay window.

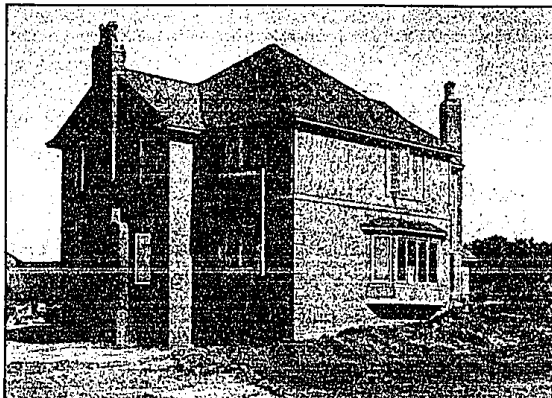
Master bathroom: Those surveyed chose separate bathtub and shower; double-sink vanities and closet space in the bathroom. Whirlpools are not a necessity.

Energy efficiency: Buyers prefer an energy efficient home with better insulation, a more efficient furnace, but this does not mean low ceilings, small rooms or no fireplaces.

Preferred features: Features ranked as very important by 60 percent or more of those surveyed include separate family/great room; two-car garage; walk-in bedroom closets; higher quality carpeting; air conditioning; storm windows; fireplace; smoke detectors. Also mentioned were high ceilings and skylights.

Home ownership was highly valued. More than 80 percent of those surveyed said a single-family detached house is the best hedge against inflation. This is followed by investment in land (53 percent) and mutual funds (42 percent).

The median age for the male head of household among those surveyed was 37.7 years and nearly 75 percent were between 25 and 50 years. The median age for female heads of household was 35.5.



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