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designs reflect Country French architecture depends mainly on the client.

"I had one client recently that (upon seeing a preliminary design) said, 'That's too French!'"

Some of the more distinct features of the architecture include shutters (long absent from much of the architecture in the region), private balconies (often embellished with decorative metal railings), brick but in a different variety of colors, recessed windows with decorative arches and pediments (many with leaded glass and metal frames), bands of different colored brick or stone along the top, stucco walls, small courtyards and terraces.

Bryce said many of the clients interested in Country French architecture are older.

"They're people that we did a contemporary for five or six years ago and they want something a bit more traditional."

Traditional, he said, can mean a lot of things of course, but what attracts people to Country French is its casual feeling. "It's not formal, yet it's still detailed — it's comfortable."

Ken Evangelista, president of

Evangelista Architects in Birmingham said that while he hasn't noted any unusual increase in demand for Country French architecture, he has noted clients are leaning toward more relaxed architectural styles.

"We do a lot of country clubs and the dining rooms are making a complete turnaround," he said. Where once the country clubs demanded formal dining rooms with seating for 200.

"Now we see formal seating for 60 people maximum; the 250 seating dining rooms are much more formal," Evangelista said.

Country French certainly fits in the "relax category" while at the same time maintaining a high level of sophistication.

Mark Farlow, a project manager at Victor Sarokl and Associates Architects P.C. in Birmingham said his firm has also noted an increase in request for Country French and similar forms like French Provincial and English Country style homes.

Farlow said many of the projects in this vein are challenging because they are done in exorbitant detail, and yet the overall affect is somewhat relaxing and

informal.

"They have a quiet civility, but a formality that is not pretentious," Farlow said.

Doing the job well requires a certain amount of sophistication on the part of the architect, which is partly the reason why there hasn't been a large number of homes built in this area.

Whether the style can be duplicated at the production housing level is debatable, Farlow said.

"One of the advantages we have here is that over the years we have been able to identify the best contractors who have, in turn, identified the best subcontractors."

The intricate work required in a Country French or one of the as-

sociated styles also necessitates the use of special artisans and craftsmen.

"(Interested clients) have an awareness of this type of architecture," Farlow said. They aren't interested in impressing people or satisfying egos — they're interested because they have an appreciation for the architectural style.

"As people travel more, they aggregate more and tastes become more refined," he said.

People buying into Country French and associated styles are past keeping up with the Joneses and have evolved to the point of doing things for the satisfaction.

"It's less competition and more enlightenment."



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