

# NEW HOMES

Business & Finance, 3AA  
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## New home buyers know what they want

By Doug Funke

Staff Writer

Sitting areas/rooms off the kitchen. Lots of windows. White cabinet facings. Special attention to wiring. High ceilings.

Those are some features prospective buyers of new houses specifically look for nowadays during their searches, builders and sales representatives say.

"People are really luxury conscious. What's amazing is they can afford it," said James Bonadeo, a Plymouth builder with 49 years experience in residential construction.

White is the popular decorative color.

"The hot thing this year is white cabinets," Bonadeo said. "Some are made of wood, some of compressed material, some plastic. It all looks the same. It's all expensive."

White microwaves, ranges and sometimes faucets, too, complement the cabinets, Bonadeo added.

"One thing people keep asking about is a sitting room off the kitchen," said Fred Capaldi, a Rochester Hills builder.

"It used to be called a nook where you could set up a table and four chairs. Now, it's more like a little room, maybe with a hexagonal-shaped ceiling," he said.

Some builders place a two-way fireplace between the kitchen and family room to accent the sitting area. Some call the space a hearth room.

"A lot of plans we're modifying because people want more living area in the kitchen area," said Ellen Whitefield, vice president for the Selective Group New Home Center in Southfield.

"People spend a lot of time there," she said. "Someone may be doing homework, someone may be cooking, someone may be working on a computer."

There is a flip side, apparently, to more space in the kitchen.

"Some rooms, like the living room, are getting smaller," Bonadeo said. "One reason, I think, is fewer people want to use them."

Customers and builders have an eye on making use of every nook and cranny.

"Window seating — it seems invariably someone asks, 'Can I put a window seat in my little girl's bedroom?'" Capaldi said. "We're doing almost the same thing in master bedrooms, put-

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**Fred Capaldi**  
Rochester Hills builder

ting little bubbles out and they become good sitting areas."

Some buyers look for bonus rooms built over the garage to be used as a play room, exercise room or computer room.

"There's a lot more customized wiring done on a house — additional electrical outlets, computer plugs, additional phone lines," said Dean Hyde, marketing director for Pulte Homes. "Everyone has to make sure they have enough current to run their toys."

Plant shelves increasingly show up at the foot and head of staircases and in the bath area of master suites.

Granite and marble countertops and brass fixtures also are on the increase. Volume ceilings are still popular. More and fancier windows add to a feeling of spaciousness.

Other things jump out at housing providers.

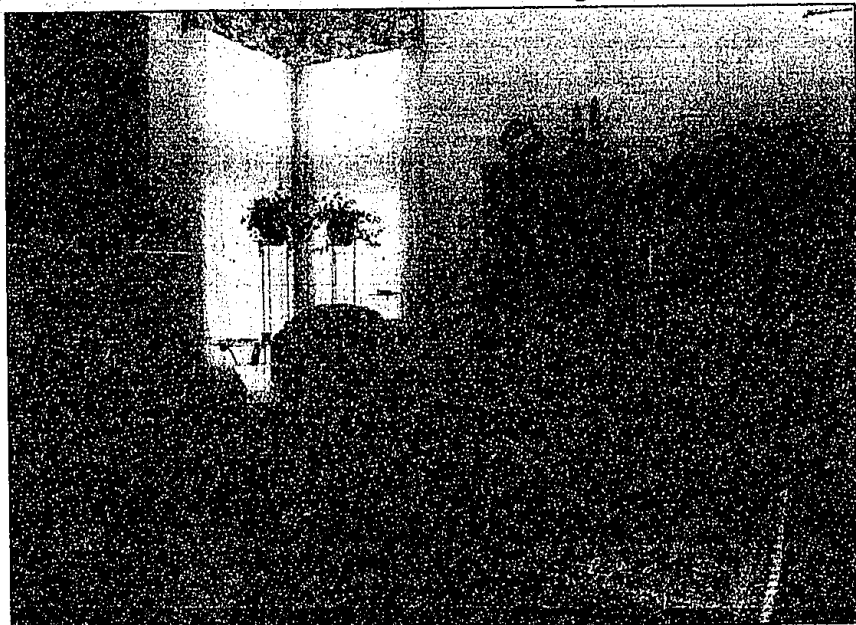
"There's an increased demand, and I expect that to continue, for first floor masters or ranches," Hyde said. "Kids are leaving home and parents want to live on the first floor but still want extra room when the kids come back to visit."

"I'm amazed at the number of recessed light fixtures and paddle ceiling fans," Capaldi said.

"Oak stairs or oak stair ends have been a big thing with us this year," Bonadeo said.

"We're finding people tend to red in brick tones," Whitefield said. "For many years, people wanted white or gray. I think when they drive past older, established houses that have red brick, they equate that with quality."

That's what everything boils down to from Whitefield's obser-



Tom Hawley/Staff Photographer

**Beautiful features: Volume windows, wood flooring and high ceilings are in demand by buyers of new houses.**

vations.

"We find people appreciate brand name quality, a company that has been in business and will

be in business," she said. "They want it to be included as part of the standard package. We offer Kohler in all-house plumbing and

GE appliances."

"The word quality keeps coming up. Customers feel like they're paying for and should get qual-

ity," Whitefield said.

"The more homes people have owned, the more definite they are in what they want," Hyde said.

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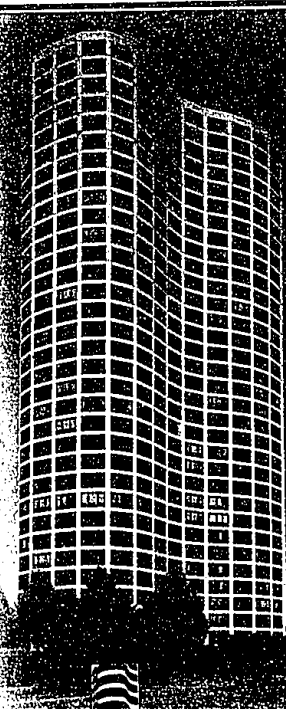
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