



Woodgrain tile, which looks like hardwood flooring but is more durable, is a big trend in Morrison Taylor's model homes. Kitchen islands are also increasingly important. TAYLOR MORRISON

## Design trends

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island. Homebuilders are coming up with entryway cubbies and cabinet systems that do just that.

Jacque Petrovalakis, spokeswoman for PulteGroup, says Pulte now offers "everyday entries" that include cabinets, cubbies or counter space where family members can drop off their belongings.

"These everyday entries are something we're adding more and more to our designs," Petrovalakis says. "They are areas where you can put your keys, kids can put their backpacks ... a place to put your shoes if you want to. Everybody wants to come in from the garage and have a place to put their stuff," she says.

**2. Multigenerational living spaces.** Ken Peterson, vice president of sales and marketing at Shea Homes, says more than a third of current and potential customers who Shea surveyed said they currently live in a multigenerational home or expect to soon. That's why builders are offering floor plans that create private living spaces for older parents or grown children.

"One thing that's really been trending up is kids are purchasing a home in a tough market to get qualified," Peterson says. "Parents are helping kids with their mortgage and (in return are getting) space to come visit."

Shea offers a second master bedroom or an attached casita, which is a second master with a sitting room or small kitchenette. Buyers of houses that cost \$500,000 or more are opting for detached casitas with their own washer and dryer, Peterson says.

Homebuilder Lennar was one of the first to jump on the multigenerational trend with its Next Gen floor plans that boast a complete suite with bedroom, eat-in kitchenette and living room that can either be integrated into a home's living space or kept as a private residence. The plans even offer an optional separate garage.

Petrovalakis says PulteGroup is also addressing the multigenerational-household trend by offering flexible spaces that can be tailored to fit each family's situation.

"The ability to create a private space for someone else in the household is available in more and more plans," she says.

**3. Flexible floor plans.** Open

floor plans are the norm in new construction, with great rooms that typically include the kitchen, family room and dining area. Now, that great-room space is becoming even more flexible.

Peterson says Shea is offering three configurations for its great rooms, which emphasize either the kitchen, family room entertaining or outdoor entertaining.

He says one change with the Shea3D flexible floor plan is that spaces feature recessed lighting, rather than fixed chandeliers for dining areas. Chandeliers can make the space less flexible.

Several homebuilders offer options for turning a den into a dining area or bedroom and vice versa. Builder Taylor Morrison offers a bonus space that's often used as a playroom or homework area where kids can congregate outside their bedrooms. The uses for these bonus spaces can change with the family's needs.

"We're incorporating multiple bonus rooms into the homes," says Brandon Cleveland, marketing manager for Taylor Morrison.

**4. Larger kitchen islands.** The kitchen island is becoming an all-purpose gathering space. It's where kids do their homework, parents pay household bills and friends gather. Now it's getting larger and even becoming a major focal point.

Cleveland says two-tiered islands with bar-height chairs on one side and counter-height work space are on their way out. Taylor Morrison customers "want flat islands, countertop height, that don't create that separation between the living room and the kitchen space," he says.

Rod Cullum, president of luxury homebuilder Cullum Homes in Scottsdale, says kitchen islands are so important his houses typically include two — one for working and one for seating.

**5. Better storage space.** New-construction homes large and small are getting more efficient. Buyers don't want dead space. What they do want is storage. Lots of it.

"All consumer groups are telling us it's so important," Petrovalakis says. "It means more closet space and better-organized closet spaces. ... Boomers very much value storage space. They have a lot of stuff still."

Petrovalakis says closets in secondary bedrooms are getting larger, and more attention is being paid to garage storage.

"Ultimately, (homebuyers) want the space to be used well,"



Zero-entry showers — large, spallike showers with no threshold — eliminate tripping hazards. PULTEGROUP

she says. "You can have large homes that feel smaller than a smaller floor plan with very efficient space. Size is important, but ultimately it's the efficiency of the floor plan that makes the difference in how happy a homeowner is."

In luxury homes, Cullum says buyers are giving up square footage in the master bedroom in favor of larger, more specialized master closet spaces.

**6. Walk-in showers.** Those largely unused tubs in master bathrooms are getting kicked to the curb in favor of larger, more luxurious showers that have no trip hazards. Petrovalakis says Pulte and Del Webb offer zero-threshold walk-in showers that feel spallike but are easy to maintain.

Cullum says curbless showers are standard in Cullum Homes. "The Jacuzzi tub is pretty much out," he says, adding that 20 percent of his clients opt for no tub at all in the master bath and the rest mostly prefer a soaker tub to anything with jets.

For real luxury, master bathrooms often look out onto a small, private garden, Cullum says. These gardens typically feature an outdoor shower, and soaker bathtubs are often placed near glass doors opening onto the private garden.

**7. Outdoor living.** Tying the great room or family room to an outdoor covered patio is becoming more important to facilitate entertaining during the more temperate months. Options such as stacking glass doors between the great room and a lighted covered patio are attractive to homebuyers.

Cleveland, marketing manager for Taylor Morrison, says a 12-foot-long sliding-glass-door from the great room to an outdoor patio is gaining popularity in the desert.

"People really, really like that. It's been very popular for us," he says.

**8. Less space/more space.**



The "everyday entries" concept gives family members a place to drop purses, shoes, backpacks and more when they enter the house. PULTEGROUP



Great rooms are still popular with buyers. LENNAR



Lennar's NextGen floor plan is designed to accommodate two adult generations living in the same household. LENNAR

Production homes are getting slightly larger. Peterson says Shea's buyers expect to stay in their homes longer and want a minimum of 1,800 to 2,000 square feet, preferably with three bedrooms and a den. An increase in multigenerational households is also boosting the minimum square footage.

Luxury homes, however, are getting smaller. Cullum says a lot of his buyers are empty nesters downsizing from 7,000- to 12,000-square-foot homes into more manageable and energy-efficient 3,500- to 5,400-square-foot homes.

**9. Porcelain tile.** Natural stone may be beautiful, but it can be a maintenance nightmare,

especially in showers. Porcelain, which is made to look like marble and other natural stone, is increasingly popular and affordable.

"Stones are trending out, and porcelain is trending in," Peterson says.

A flooring trend is plank tile with a wood-grain effect. It takes a second look to realize the floors aren't hardwood. Cleveland says it's a popular choice in kitchens and great rooms.

"It's more durable than vinyl flooring, and the price is comparable," he says. "It's been the main flooring in quite a few of our models that we've introduced lately."