

BUILDING SAVVY MAGAZINE

DESIGN SAVVY THE NEW HOME – MORE THAN SHELTER

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Think back of the home you grew up in, not the family environment but the actual home. It was probably nothing more than a shelter which addressed only the basic activities such as sleeping, eating, etc. Chances are there is very little that stands out other than how inefficient it was. If you're my age you'll remember that garage doors had to be opened manually. Meals took longer to prepare and longer to clean up. Phones took longer to dial. There were three television stations to choose from and the picture was in black and white. Every time you wanted to change the channel the only remote control was actually attached to your wrist. The speed in which laundry would dry was a function of how sunny and warm the day was (when is the last time you saw a clothes line?). Furniture would fade from the sun's rays (no low e glass back then).

Seldom do we take the time to contemplate how our lives have become more efficient due to the advances in residential building materials and appliances. With the rising popularity of television shows focusing on interior design, yards, landscaping, storage, and even entire house "makeovers," the public is only now starting to become aware of residential design and all its possibilities. Just as advances in building materials and appliances have changed our lives in the past, good residential design will have even a bigger impact on our lives in the future.

The new homes of today (and even more so in the future) provide, and will provide more than shelter and basic needs; they'll accommodate multiple needs, functions, environments and lifestyles. Today's homes need to address; entertainment, dining, recreation, relaxation, learning, work, social relationships, organization, safety, health, energy, communications, hobby's and other special interests, etc.

In residential design there are different levels of detail and awareness. The basic needs are easily addressed and readily identified. The more complex needs (some of which were previously mentioned) require additional thought and planning. Conventional room names no longer adequately describe the use of the space. Many spaces may be used for multiple functions. The relationship between properly designed spaces and the people occupying those spaces result in peace, harmony, enjoyment, and a more healthy and happy lifestyle. When properly executed, a home can become an extension of the personality of those that occupy it.

Family relationships can greatly be improved by providing the individual with private space as well as interactive spaces which encourages healthy communication and interaction between family members. Private spaces do not necessarily require large private rooms, but can be play rooms, alcoves and other nooks. Individuals must also be protected and shielded from harmful influences that can penetrate the home through unwanted media and unsolicited internet web pages.

Homes today should also be properly engineered and constructed to better withstand wind and earthquake forces. Estimates of damage to single-family dwellings in the San Fernando earthquake ranged from \$58 - \$114.4 million. The damage to residences – mostly of modern design and construction – was of greater dollar value than damage to any other building category in the private sector. Most jurisdictions require that a home be constructed using an engineering design prepared by a licensed professional or structural engineer. Greater care should be given to ensure that homes are constructed per the engineering design.

In extreme cases homes may also be constructed with safe rooms sheathed with bullet proof glass and Kevlar (also used in bulletproof vests). Special ventilation systems can filter air and remove harmful bacteria. In other cases food and water storage are sometimes located in reinforced concrete rooms under front porches.

An architect or residential designer with proper vision can assist an owner and builder with constructing a home based on their lifestyle and needs. Other consultants can include; interior decorators, lighting designers, landscape architects, electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, structural engineers, civil engineers, geotechnical engineers, kitchen specialists, media specialists, and other specialty consultants and sub-contractors. The construction and design of a home is often times a group effort.