

YOUR HOME

MAY
2009

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING



Grand Entrance

The word “mud” might not sound inviting, but a mudroom can actually be a welcoming — and useful — space. Mudrooms, which serve as a transition between the outdoors and the inside of a home, are traditionally found in cold, snowy climates as a place to change out of wet clothes and shoes. But, whether large or small, they’re ideal for houses in any climate. They can minimize cleaning (no tracking dirt through the house), maximize storage and help with organization. Whether you already have a mudroom or are thinking about creating one, consider:

Location. Off the kitchen or near the back door are the most popular locations for mudrooms, but garages and utility closets are also prime spots.

Flooring. This is the one place in the house where the floors are supposed to get dirty. Choose a durable, non-slip material — tile, stone, vinyl, laminate, concrete — in a dark color. And be sure to include a few doormats: a fiber or rubber mat to clean off shoes and an absorbent, washable rug to keep dirt from getting tracked in.

Walls. Surely they will get dinged and scratched and splashed, so choose coverings wisely. Vinyl wallpaper or an easy-to-clean, moisture-proof paint should do the trick.

Seating. Although you likely won’t be spending too much time in your mudroom, a place to sit is key. A sturdy chair or bench is useful for removing wet shoes or boots.

Storage. Choose organizing accessories based on the main purpose of the space and who uses it most. If it functions mainly as a staging area for adults, be sure to prominently feature coat and key hooks, as well as a place to sort mail. If kids are the main focus, include labeled storage bins and designated areas for backpacks and after-school activity gear, such as sporting goods. No matter how the room is used, it’s a good idea to include plenty of shelving and racks for shoes.

Sources: This Old House, Lowe’s

A Lending Hand

Home renovations can be daunting, but financing them doesn’t need to be. Homebuyers considering a fixer-upper and homeowners thinking about doing major rehab work might want to consider an FHA 203K loan.

Often called rehab or renovation loans, 203K loans differ from traditional mortgage loans. Buyers who want to purchase a home in need of repair usually have to secure a loan to buy the property, get additional financing to complete the renovation and then get a permanent mortgage to pay off the interim loans. 203K loans, however, are made based on the after-repair value and include an escrow account, in which the money is dispersed in draws as the necessary renovations are being completed.

Renovation loans can be used in three ways: to purchase an existing home (and the land attached to it) and renovate it; to pay off existing debt on a current residence and renovate it; or to purchase an existing property and move it to a new piece of land. The types of improvements allowed on 203K loans are extensive — painting, room additions, decks, bathroom and kitchen remodels, and even going green. Luxury items and improvements are generally not eligible.

Homebuyers need to work closely with their REALTOR® as well as a contractor to get a detailed statement about the extent and general cost of the rehab work and the expected market value of the property after the completion of the work. After finding a HUD-approved lender — not all banks administer these loans — and inspections and appraisals, the work can begin. For more information, go to www.hud.gov.

Sources: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 203Kloan.net



fast fact >>>>

Exterior home improvements, including wood deck additions and siding replacement, can return more than 80 percent of project costs upon resale.



Source: 2008-09 Remodeling Cost v. Value Report



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Kitchen Heat

Stainless steel appliances. Granite countertops. Not long ago, these were the hottest kitchen features. But now they're expected and practically come standard. What are the next major trends to keep an eye on?

According to a recent National Kitchen and Bath Association survey of more than 200 kitchen designers, cherry and maple cabinets, quartzite countertops and custom-paneled appliances are hot. Where oak cabinets were once the must-have, more than 75 percent of survey participants now report using cherry and maple, followed by paints and exotic woods. And although nearly all designers believe stainless steel is still the most popular appliance finish, 77 percent say that custom paneling on appliances is becoming more common. Granite is still the most frequently used countertop material, but 65 percent of designers report using more quartzite,

another durable stone material.

One thing that hasn't changed is the trend toward bigger, more open kitchens that accommodate more than one cook and serve as more than just a place to cook. In incorporating these bigger kitchens, the traditional "work triangle" — the path between the refrigerator, food prep area and cooking area — is being replaced with work zones. As kitchens get bigger and even more functional, it seems certain that a trend toward specialization will grow as well.

Sources: National Kitchen and Bath Association



* DID YOU KNOW

In the 1920s, Henry Ford turned wood scraps from the production of Model T's into charcoal briquettes. He built a charcoal plant, which later became Kingsford Charcoal.

Source: www.grilling.com

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