

BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS NEW HOME SURVEY REVEALS “CENTS AND SENSIBILITY” AS TOP PRIORITIES IN 2010

Executive Editor Presents Survey Results and Key Trends at International Builder Show

Las Vegas, NV (January 20, 2010) – Better Homes and Gardens today revealed proprietary research and insights on what consumers are looking for in their next home and overall priorities guiding current and future home improvement projects.

In a speech at the NAHB International Builders Show, Eliot Nusbaum, Better Homes and Gardens Executive Editor Home Design, presented the results of the Next Home Survey along with reported trends from a nationwide network of field editors, the magazine's Home Improvement Challenge and editorial coverage.

The survey of nationwide potential new home buyers and existing home owners who are planning improvements in the next few months found top priorities to include price, energy-efficiency, organization and comfort.

“Not surprisingly, we continue to see a ‘cents and sensibility’ approach when it comes to buying or improving a home, with practicality and price being top priorities,” says Nusbaum. “Today’s homeowner is also looking for a home that fits the entire family – from a multi-tasking home office, to expanding storage space needs, to a living room that can adapt to advancements in home entertainment and technology.”

Future Home Buyers

A Smaller and More Energy-Efficient Home

Continuing the “downsizing” trend, more consumers (36% in 2009; 32% in 2008) expect their next home to be “somewhat smaller” or “much smaller.”

A greener home will be a priority, with 87% planning to have high-efficiency heating/cooling in their next home and 86% planning to have high-efficiency appliances; 24.9% will have geo-thermal heat.

When asked how today’s housing market and economic turmoil have impacted priorities for their next home, 76% said energy-efficient heating and cooling systems will be “more important” and for 70% Energy Star appliances will be “more important.”

Almost half (48%) say green building practices/materials will be “more important” when purchasing their next home.

An Organized, Multi-Tasking Home with No Wasted Space

The home office is a priority as 59% of consumers plan to have one in the home. Of those, only 28% want a separate dedicated home office space (compared to 64% in 2008), with one-third (33%) now wanting a more multi-purposed space, such as combined office/computer/ hobby/craft/art room.

A well organized home is key, with 66% of respondents listing “no-space-wasted” design and 62% listing ample storage space as attributes that will take on more importance.

Also on the ‘wish list’ for the next home is: a separate laundry room (85%); an outdoor grilling and living area (68%); a kitchen with eating area (67%); and an extra bedroom with bath (65%).

America’s love affair with the large garage continues to flourish with 37% now wanting a 3-car or larger garage compared to 29% in 2008.

A Family-Friendly Home

Nearly two-thirds (62%) consider a comfortable family gathering space to be top priority in the next home.

Of lesser interest this year is a kitchen, family and everyday eating area combined in one space (49% vs 56% in 2008) replaced by significantly greater interest in a family room partially separated from the kitchen (42% vs 27% in 2008).

There is also an increased desire (51% vs 44% in 2008) for a wall-mounted flat screen TV in the main family living area and for networked computers/home entertainment center (48% vs 43% in 2008).

Home Improvers

“With the economy still a major concern, right now it’s more about the ‘got to’ improvements than the ‘want to’ improvements,” says Nusbaum. “The focus is now on low-cost improvements that will pack a big punch.”

With only 16% feeling “now is the right time to spend” on home improvements vs 38% saying “now is not the right time to spend,” 52% are focusing their efforts on needed repairs and maintenance.

Three-quarters (76%) say the economy has had an impact on their home-improvement plans, with half (50%) having changed their home-improvement plans during the last year.

Smaller projects prove to be the most popular, such as painting a room (54%), replacing/adding flooring or carpeting (38%), decorating/redecorating a room (35%) and landscaping the yard (30%).

Energy-efficiency is also a focus of future home projects, with respondents placing importance on installation of Energy Star windows/doors (34%), high-efficiency heating/cooling (31%) and Energy Star appliances (31%).

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About Better Homes and Gardens

Better Homes and Gardens is America’s leading lifestyle magazine for women who have a passion for the home and the life they create there. With a circulation of 7.6 million and a readership of nearly 40 million, Better Homes and Gardens delivers smart, approachable editorial on design and individual style, decorating and gardening, food and entertaining and personal and family well-being.

About the Study

The online survey fielded Nov 9-16, 2009 among BHG reader panelists who plan to purchase a home or do a major home improvement/decorating project in the next 12 months. A total of 2,342 completed the survey for a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points. The Meredith Consumer Panel consists of nearly 200,000 women who share a passion for home and family; they have become part of Better Homes and Gardens brand family by taking part in research, marketing and other activities.

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