

13 Features New-Home Buyers Say Are Essential, Desirable

Home buyers appear willing to sacrifice property size to afford homeownership, as the average size of a newly constructed house drops to its lowest level in 13 years—2,479 square feet, according to new research from the National Association of Home Builders. Twenty-six percent of builders say they plan to build even smaller in 2024, the research shows.

But while buyers may accept a smaller home, they want it to be more personalized, said Donald Ruthroff, founding principal at Design Story Spaces LLC, during a press conference this week at the International Builders' Show in Las Vegas. “They want it to feel like it was made just for them and be significantly different than their neighbors’ homes,” he said. Ruthroff added that an example of this personalization could be a kitchen island that resembles a piece of furniture.

Nearly 40% of home buyers say they’re willing to buy a home with a smaller lot while 35% say they’d buy a smaller house, according to the NAHB survey, called “[What Home Buyers Really Want](#).” Respondents who opt for a smaller home say they’d be most willing to shrink spaces like the home office (53%) and the dining room (52%). But they’re not willing to sacrifice the size of the kitchen or closets, said Rose Quint, NAHB’s assistant vice president of survey research, at the press conference.

Buyers are prioritizing other key features around the home.

Eighty percent or more of home buyers in NAHB's survey rate the following property amenities as "essential" or "desirable":

- 1. Laundry room**
- 2. Patio**
- 3. Energy Star windows**
- 4. Exterior lighting**
- 5. Ceiling fan**
- 6. Garage storage**
- 7. Front porch**
- 8. Hardwood flooring**
- 9. Full bath on the main level**
- 10. Energy Star appliances**
- 11. Walk-in pantry**
- 12. Landscaping**
- 13. Table space in the kitchen**

Technology features are gaining popularity, too. Over the last decade, the following home features have posted the most significant growth among home buyers, according to NAHB:

- Security cameras**
- Wired home security system**
- Programmable thermostat**
- Multi-zone HVAC system**
- Energy management system**
- Video doorbell**

"Buyers want technology mostly to increase the safety of their home and also to better control the temperature inside their home," Quint said. She also flagged other home features posting

significant growth over the past 10 years, including:

- Quartz or engineered stone for kitchen countertops
- Lighting control system
- Outdoor fireplace
- Outdoor kitchen
- Built-in seating in the kitchen
- Exposed beams

Also, with the growth of multigenerational living, more home buyers appear to prefer two primary bedroom suites rather than one: 55% say they prefer this layout, NAHB data shows.

What Builders Are Prioritizing

NAHB also surveyed homebuilders to find the features they say they're most likely to include in a newly built home in 2024.

Topping their list:

- Laundry room
- Great room (kitchen/family/living room)
- Nine-foot-plus first-floor ceilings
- Central island in kitchen
- Walk-in closet in primary bedroom
- Low-E windows
- Walk-in pantry
- Front porch
- Programmable thermostat
- Two-car garage
- Indoor fireplace
- Patio

- Quartz kitchen countertops

On the other hand, some of the least likely features builders say they'll include in a typical home in 2024 include cork flooring for living areas on the main level, geothermal heat pump, dual toilets in a primary bath, glass walls and a pet washing station, the NAHB survey finds.