



Scottsdale Follows National Home Builder Trends

By Dru Bloomfield, a Realtor with John Hall & Associates

THE SCOTTSDALE REAL estate market has experienced some dramatic highs and lows in the last five years, and just last month, an Arizona State University study noted that Scottsdale home prices are still in a free fall. At the same time, Scottsdale single family home sales have been climbing steadily, with more than 400 homes sold in the last month. While it's easy to focus on the numbers, it can be much more productive for home sellers to know what buyers are looking for in homes now.

In a recent article published by National Association of Realtors, the following home buyer trends were noted:

- The average size of a new single family home decreased in 2009.
- The number of homes with four bedrooms has been decreasing since 2007.
- Homes with two stories peaked in 2006, and have been on a downward trend since.

The report also included the top-10 features that builders will include in 2010, as compiled by *Home Trends 2010: Consumers' Most Sought-after Features*.

1. Walk-in Closet in Master Bedroom
2. Laundry Room
3. Insulated Front Door
4. Great Room
5. Low-e Windows
6. Linen Closet
7. Programmable Thermostat
8. Energy Efficient Appliances and Lighting

9. Separate Shower & Tub in Master Bedroom
10. 9-foot Ceilings or Higher on First Floor

Scottsdale Perspective

From my perspective, working with buyers purchasing existing homes in Scottsdale, I agree with most of the list. In our desert climate, buyer requests typically include a newer air conditioner, ceiling fans and a well-maintained roof. Great outdoor living spaces with a pool are often a requirement, and three-car garages can be a priority. A kitchen island is frequently on the list.

One thing that newcomers to our city find is that the farther north they look in Scottsdale, the newer the homes. And the newer the home, the more likely it will have high ceilings, a great room, walk-in closets, and a large spacious master bathroom. High-efficiency appliances are the norm, too.

Scottsdale has a small number of new home communities, and most are in the vicinity of the Scottsdale Airpark. I spoke with local agents at two of these developments to get their perspectives.

DC Ranch

Dave Arner, with Rosewood Homes in DC Ranch, agreed with the builder's list and said that nine out of 10 features are standard in their homes, with the exception being an upgrade. He added that other important requirements for buyers are a single-level floor plan, a smaller yard and low-maintenance property.

He indicated most buyers are looking for vacation homes, so their requirements are slightly different than someone looking for a primary residence. Second-home buyers are looking for a turnkey property, that is light and bright, and energy efficient at the same time.



Grayhawk Villas

Stephanie Roney, with Cachet Homes, sells condos in Encore at Grayhawk Villas, most often to second-home buyers. She confirmed that seasonal owners are looking for a low-maintenance, lock-and-leave property. Buyers generally assume that newly built homes will have high ceilings and be energy efficient. Single-level living with no stair access is a priority, as well as a great room, since most buyers want nothing formal.

Scottsdale home buying trends do match those in the national study, but due to its warmer climate, casual living style, and high number of second-home owners, new home builders have tuned into these additional buyer expectations. Sellers of existing Scottsdale homes can benefit from knowing buyer trends, so they can prepare their property and present it in its best light, increasing the probability of a timely sale. ■

Dru Bloomfield, a Realtor with John Hall & Associates, has been working with residential buyers and sellers in Scottsdale and the surrounding communities since 2003. She posts regularly about the Scottsdale real estate market in her blog, AtHomeInScottsdale.com, reviewing the current market and looking for future trends. Contact: 602-524-3129, dru@click2az.com.