

# Real Estate Reality

## Color Schemes and Décor for Your New Home to Maximize Resale Value



-Debbie Yost

Being able to select your own color scheme is one of the attractions of buying a brand new home. The excitement of being able to personalize a home can quickly deteriorate into frustration if partners haven't discussed their personal tastes and decorating preferences prior to arriving at the "design selection appointment." Many new home buyers eagerly arrive at the design showroom with the expectation of creating a stunning new home and can be dismayed at the additional cost required to upgrade their selections beyond a few basic choices. I've witnessed their disappointment and frustration at being greeted by hundreds of choices in carpet and flooring, cabinet style, wood type and finish options and all the numerous selections in appliances, countertops, hardware and lighting, many of which carry an additional cost as an optional feature. With proper planning and prior discussion this selection process can be enjoyable and set the stage for maximizing the home's resale value when it's time to sell.

With most of the new home builders offering generous incentives and reduced sales prices on homes, the initial cost of purchasing a new home can seem much less expensive than buying a similar resale home. Frequently the "builder incentive" will apply toward upgrades selected at the design center, but with the dizzying array of choices, the incentive allowance can be quickly exceeded if buyers get carried away with too much personalization, raising the price way above a similar resale home and creating problems when reselling the home in the future.

One of the best pieces of advice I received many years ago from a design professional was to choose a basic color scheme of three complimentary neutral colors and carry that basic color scheme throughout, both inside and out. When I've offered this same advice to new homebuyers, some who have been

through the process before knowingly shake their heads in agreement. However many first time new homebuyers have their hopes set on using their favorite colors on the floors, countertops and hard surfaces, and don't want to select neutral colors. What I've learned is that today's fashionable colors will be tomorrow's dated color schemes and if the permanent, more expensive items such as countertops, carpet and tile are neutral, it's far easier and less expensive to update the color scheme with furniture, window coverings and paint.

Cabinets are one of the items that are expensive to replace, which means selecting attractive well made neutral finishes that will appeal to a wide variety of tastes makes good economic sense. I offer the same suggestion for toilets and tubs. I've witnessed some folks insist that black or grey designer toilets and tubs are necessary. Unless this is a very expensive custom home where future resale value is less of an issue, colored plumbing fixtures add unnecessary expense.

Moving on to flooring choices, I strongly recommend hard surfaces such as tile in the high traffic areas of the home, such as the entry, bathrooms, kitchen and major walkways. Larger size tile is quite popular and choosing a neutral tone with color variations of taupes, beiges, soft greys and various shades of white will allow accenting with a variety of more intense colors. Hardwood flooring and synthetic flooring such as Pergo is also popular, and much easier to stand on than tile. Be aware that placing these types of floors in baths and kitchens requires more attention and maintenance. Water splashes, plumbing leaks, grease or food drips can easily damage these floors.

Carpet selections are quite varied in style and color. Plush carpeting is typically a more formal look and both light and dark colors require more care to keep clean. Friezes, cables or twists typ-

ically are a more casual look and often have a mixture of different color shades and sizes of yarn. While you may be tempted to purchase your favorite shade of blue, green or mauve, or use a different color in each room of the house, smart homebuyers select a higher grade of carpet in a neutral shade and use the same color throughout the home. Carpet samples are rated as to wearability, stain resistance, and crush resistance. It makes good sense to upgrade both the quality of the carpet and the pad underneath to maximize the life of the carpet.

Appliance color and countertop colors are additional places to stay neutral. There are a variety of laminates that mimic hard surfaces such as granite, which is extremely popular and durable. Stainless steel is also a popular choice for appliance finishes. Depending on the price range of the home, it may be a good investment to select granite slab countertops and upgraded appliances. Generally if most homes in your price range have these options, go ahead and invest in them. If these upgrades are not typical in your price range, be aware that while these may make your home more desirable to future homebuyers, you may not recoup much of the cost of installing them.

While these more neutral color schemes I am suggesting may not give your home the pizzazz you are hoping for, keep in mind that furniture, window coverings, pillows, towels, and kitchen accessories in the colors you love can give your home the design pop you are seeking without limiting the future appeal and resale value when you sell your home in the future. Even though every new home buyer believes they will never want to sell their home and will live there forever, most eventually sell and buy something else, due to a change in their family size or circumstances, or a job change. Even if you live in that same home for twenty years, I can guarantee that your color preferences will change, and it's far easier and less expensive to update with new furniture and accessories than to replace flooring and countertops.

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