



Designer FYI

By Kris Linder

Design is in the details

Almost extinct is the California ranch home as we knew it. Once the mainstay of the South Bay, the one-story ranch is still the token home being built among the two- and three-story homes one sees in every development of today's valley landscape — only with one big difference. Architecture has intervened, and the once simply designed ranch home now has sometimes elaborate exterior details that signify — or are supposed to signify — an altogether different architectural style.

Mostly due to the rising cost and value of land, in order to use less space and get more home, one has no choice but to go up — although recent trends indicate a willingness to go down, as well; down into the ground, that is — basements are making a resurgence. These new basement levels have the added benefit of light wells. Light wells are areas built around the foundation of the home that require a 4-foot minimum to allow light to filter down to the lower level from the ground level. It offers homeowners the opportunity to

install glass sliding doors instead of the traditional high windows that used to be the basement's only light source.

Capturing any and all views available, using imported and reclaimed materials, and putting in as many windows and French doors allowed by code regulations seem to be the norm in designing homes today.

Trends show that hardwood flooring, hand-set tile and granite can be found in almost all homes being designed for today's market. Large soaking tubs in the master bathrooms, rounded corners on sheetrock walls, 9-foot (or higher) ceilings, dramatic foyers and media alcoves are just some of the items buyers expect. In addition to these, buyers seek out such architectural details as stone and wood moldings around doors and windows; coffered, coved, round, barrel and vaulted ceilings with soffit lighting for ambiance; built-in libraries; and wine cellars. These aspects and more are becoming the mainstay in many Silicon Valley homes.

Architects and designers who create expan-

sive living areas and open design are getting braver as they move away from the neutral palettes of previous years and are using more color for both interiors and exteriors. The Tuscan style seems to be the trend for a timeless and classic European-influenced look.

Designers have gravitated to more natural materials when possible, so stone and rock of all types have made a big comeback — more European influence. Due to the increased use of moldings, stone, creative finishes, interesting ceiling treatments and stunning lighting options, more and more new companies are emerging to supply these products, with suppliers and homeowners both reaping the rewards of today's architectural and design trends. ↑

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