

By Sonya Goodwin Hemmings

The master bedroom has always been something of a "place apart" within a home — more sizeable than other bedrooms, with a larger closet and its own bathroom. By today's standards, however, those basic features are too, well, basic.

Homeowners are looking for luxury in the part of a home now commonly known as the master suite — an expansive area that includes not only spacious sleeping quarters, capacious closets and a bathroom built for two, but also perhaps a sitting area that can accommodate a small library or home-office setup, an exercise area, and even access to a secluded outdoor patio or balcony.

Indeed, for the amount of space and money often committed to a master suite, "our clients want it to be almost a resort, where you can have most of your needs met," says Kris Linder of Interior Design Source in Los Gatos.

Mastering the bedroom

"The trend is to create a sanctuary, a retreat. And it's fairly glorious," she says, describing "voluptuous" bathrooms that are more like private spas and "secret gardens" that provide an indoor-outdoor ambience. Linder advises her clients to maximize space and add dimension to the master suite by raising all or part of the ceiling and creating recessed niches in walls into which furniture can be placed so that it doesn't project too far into the room or encroach excessively upon floor space.

Both contractors, along with designer Linder, also tout the trend of including a cavernous closet or two within the suite. "Closets tend to be very spacious and beautifully appointed with furniture-grade built-ins," Lyon says. Linder adds that dressers and benches are frequently placed in this part of the suite.

Master Bedroom Resources

Interior Design Source

Kris Linder

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Sizable opportunities

Why are people bending over backward to accommodate their guests? Partly, it's a matter of square footage, says Kris Linder, owner of Interior Design Source in Los Gatos for the past 20 years. "More than 30 years ago, no matter how small a home was, people always made a 'guest room' of sorts, because, back then, family always stayed with family," she says. "Then, about 15 years ago, people started transitioning their guest spaces into home offices." Now, Linder says, because today's homes have much more square footage, there's usually room for both an office and a guest room.

But size isn't all that matters. Linder surmises it's also a matter of lifestyle, particularly because it's become increasingly rare for extended-family members to live in the same city or state. "Families distance themselves and spread out; children go off and get other lives in other cities and they're having children of their own," she says. "That's one reason that homeowners are dedicating space to guest rooms — they want to have a separate place for their children and grandchildren to stay when they come to visit."

And when she says "separate place," she doesn't mean an air mattress tucked into the corner of a room. After all, many Silicon Valley residents have friends and family living in other countries, so guests tend to be long-term, staying for a month or longer. "Mom and dad might come and stay for two or three months, or friends from Europe might stay for a month," says Linder. "That's why these guest rooms get used so often." And it's why a cot in the corner just won't do.

Linder, whose firm works mostly with remodeled homes, says her clients tend to spend "a goodly amount" on furnishing and decorating a guest room. For instance, she estimates that a client spending \$500,000 on a remodeling job might dedicate \$35,000 to \$50,000 of that amount for the guest room. "And that's on the low end," she says, adding that most modern guest spaces incorporate furnishings and materials that are as upscale as those used in the master suites.

Creating a comfort zone

The main goal of a guest room, of course, is to create a comfortable space where guests can relax and feel at home, but at the same time have all their basic needs met.

The first task is to establish a theme, says Linder, whether it's a B&B-type room, Sonoma Mission, European, Victorian, French Country, contemporary, or whatever mood you're trying to evoke. She says that before she embarks on a project, she investigates her clients closely to learn how they live and what they do. "All of our design work is done to create a sanctuary, or a 'signature environment' that's designed to fit the client's lifestyle," says Linder.

Guest rooms, she says, pose a unique design challenge, since they're typically not designed for a specific individual, as is a master bedroom, a nursery or a teen's bedroom. "We don't know who's going to be staying there," says Linder. "With a guest room, we have to think in terms of all the people who might stay in that room." For this reason, the guest rooms Linder designs are typically centered around a theme that blends in with the rest of the home.

Once a theme is established, it

all comes down to the details. For creating an inviting guest space, Linder suggests the following:

The use of wallpaper rather than painted walls. "It pulls the room together, and gives it a feeling of comfort," she says, adding that it doesn't necessarily have to be patterned wallpaper like stripes or florals, but can be textured or even have a faux-finish appearance. Also, by using colored or textured wallpaper, you can get away with using less color elsewhere in the room, perhaps opting for solid-color bedspreads, pillows and chair coverings.

A good mattress and quality bedding. "You want the bed to look really inviting," she says. "Your guests are not in their own bed, and you want them to have a good night's sleep," she says. A good throw to snuggle up with also is a nice touch.

Good lighting. This includes reading lamps, ambient light and perhaps a nightlight.

Other touches might include reading chairs, a writing desk, a television armoire, a mirrored vanity, and a side table large enough to hold books, eyeglasses and a glass of water.

And of course, there's the private bath, which Linder says is almost standard in today's guest spaces. "When people are away from home, they don't always sleep well, so we try to create a comfortable, fully-equipped room," she says.