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By Jeff Bell

HOME DESIGNS, APPEARANCE TAKE A TRADITIONAL TURN HOME BUILDERS UPDATING ELEVATIONS WITH A NOD TO THE PAST

A renewed taste for traditional architecture by new home buyers in Greater Columbus doesn't surprise Duffy Homes architect Tim Carr.

That means area builders have classic styles such as Colonial, Georgian and Craftsman in mind as they tweak the exterior look of their home offerings.

"For the most part, Columbus leans toward the traditional side. Maybe it's because of being in the Midwest and a comfort level with that you grew up with," Carr said. "Harsh, contemporary styles have never been well-received here."

So home buyers are looking for more traditional features such as gabled roofs, segmented arches and large front porches with columns and detailed millwork.

Carr said a good example of new design with traditional features are Duffy's luxury condominiums in the Keswick development in New Albany.

Their Georgian styling includes arches and columns that mark the front entrance, dormers and 12-pane windows.

Duffy also draws on traditional architectural influences with coastal Ireland styling in homes it offers in Dublin's Ballantrae development. That includes large chimneys, millwork on front porches and custom window grids with diamond-shaped patterns.

A typical Duffy home sells for more than \$500,000 and measures about 4,000 square feet. But Carr said home builders at lower price points are also responding to home buyers' increasing bent toward traditional architecture and neighborhoods.

That has been the case at M/I Homes for several years, said Robert Schottenstein, president of the Columbus-based home builder.

For example, M/I's Cherry Landing development in Canal Winchester offers the builder's Carriage and Vintage lines. They feature large front porches, shake single accents and other detailing inspired by the Craftsman period.

Alleys run behind some of the houses, allowing for garage entrances at the rear of a home, rather than at the front. Home prices in that development start in the \$150,000 range.

In the higher price range (\$670,000 and up), Georgian-style designs from M/I's Showcase Homes line are featured in the Lansdowne development at the Country Club of New Albany. They have copper downspouts, English basements and studios about the garages.

Some Colonial-style designs have also been added as M/I has updated its housing line, Schottenstein said.

“We see our product evolving into a more traditional look,” he said. “It’s architecture that has stood the test of time. The Midwest and Columbus in particular have fairly traditional tastes.”

Scottenstein said such homes are being built on smaller lots in old-style neighborhoods in which the houses are clustered together. That leaves more room for parks and common areas, he said.

While classic looking on the outside, the interiors of M/I’s home designs continue to be turned into buyers’ contemporary tastes with large kitchens, family rooms, master bath suites and vaulted ceilings.

Traditional exteriors have always been featured in Bob Webb’s line of custom-built homes, said Neil Rogers, vice president of sales and marketing for the Lewis Centered -based company.

Some new designs under development will build on that classic tradition with features such as gable and hip roofs, dormers, arches, porch columns and plank siding, as well as garages that open to the side or the rear of the lot rather than toward the front street.

But Bob Webb doesn’t plan on reviving the plain wrapper saltbox architecture that was once a staple in house design. It just doesn’t pack the architectural pizzazz that today’s buyers demand, Rogers said.

“People want a lot of changes happening on the front of their homes,” he said, pointing to the shifts in roof lines as an example.

“There are only so many ways you can build a house-it’s four walls- but you’ve got to make it exciting.”

Prospective buyers also want that excitement when they look at sales materials, Rogers said. That motivated Bob Webb to pop up illustrations of its home elevations by giving them a three-dimensional look rather than flat line drawings.

The designs can be adjusted to show what the house would look like with a full porch or partial one, or with a change in roof lines.

“It’s an ongoing process to keep existing plans fresh and develop new ones,” he said.

“The challenge is to get people in and for them not to overlook you.”