



Embracing Authentic Architecture

How Authenticity Creates a Timeless, Diverse Community

A growing phenomenon over the last several years has been an emergence of traditional, historical elevation styles emanating from the first half of the 20th century. “Traditional Neighborhood Developments” or “TND’s” as they are known have been the source of much of this resurgence, along with increased emphasis placed on builders from master developers, jurisdictions and the general public. Utilizing authenticity as a driving force in product development can greatly achieve the purpose of creating a rich, varied street scene and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, which is what everyone is emphasizing these days.

What is authenticity? Some may say that by definition, authenticity reflects that which is original or genuine. It may seem enigmatic to think of production homebuilding and originality in the same breath, but another way to look at authenticity from the building point of view is in utilizing roof massing, materials, detail and colors to create historic, perhaps regional architectural styles that buyers identify with. Many of us are from the East and Midwest, and look back with nostalgia to the character of houses and neighborhoods around us when growing up. For those “natives,” even within the Phoenix area there are neighborhoods reflective of this character.

Aside from Spanish, Italianate, French Provincial, Tudor, Craftsman and Prairie architectural styles that were prominent in pre-WWII United States, more agrarian European styles have gained popularity in the Southwest of late, such as Normandy, French Country and Tuscan. Utilizing scale, proportion, details, materials and color in a certain way per architectural style can provide a level of authenticity that buyers will be able to identify with.

A few ideas to achieve authentic architecture are described below:

Spanish Colonial

Common to the southwest, Spanish Colonial architecture is very popular, due to its elegance in simplicity and relatively lower cost compared to other styles. Utilizing a sand stucco finish with cream and light earth tone colors, stucco fascia, ‘S’ concrete tile roofing, simple gabled roof forms and rotunda forms help provide a level of authenticity to this style. Exterior wing wall extensions, hip roof elements with exposed rafter tails, wrought iron grates and occasional use of shutters further define this style.



Simple, sculpted forms define a Spanish Colonial elevation. Note the use of exposed rafter tails, in tandem with coved stucco fascia.

Tuscan

Although some Italianate building forms made their way to the United States in the early 20th century, recently there has been a surge of interest in the Tuscan architectural style, and anything to do with Tuscany for that matter. With ample stone massing elements, bold ochre and earth-tone body colors along with a variety of eave detailing and shutter applications, there is no wonder why this is such a sought after look. A combination of gable and hip roof massing forms with ‘S’ tile roofs are emblematic of this style. Preformed corbels and stucco eaves can tend to formalize the Tuscan style, while exposed rafter tails give an agrarian character to the house.



Emphasizing horizontal lines in tandem with vertically-oriented window groupings and stone veneer characterize the Prairie style elevations.

Prairie

Although Frank Lloyd Wright introduced this revolutionary house style in the midwest, it feels at home in the southwest due to its wide stucco overhangs and predominately hipped roof lines. A key to achieving authenticity with this elevation style is to emphasize horizontal elements such as trim bands and stone veneer, while providing vertically proportioned window groupings. Use of rich, dark earth tones for body colors and flat roof tile are ways to help in the authenticity of Prairie style elevations.

A great deal can be said for creating authentic neighborhoods that we can be proud to say we crafted, where people desire to live and raise their families. By applying some of these techniques, authentic architecture can be achieved in a production setting and make for a timeless, diverse community for years to come. Developers are asking for it, cities are promoting it, buyers are desiring it, so why not embrace it?



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