

An architectural melting pot

The Valley's home designs come from a variety of inspirations

By Paula Hubbs Cohen

Cookie cutter is out. Diversity and nostalgia are in.

Whether it's Spanish Colonial, Tuscan, Territorial or Craftsman, our unique Valley of the Sun is filled with a wide range of architectural styles, many of which incorporate features reminiscent of a simpler way of life.

"As recently as five or six years ago, everything here was pretty much the same architecturally—sort of an eclectic mix of desert contemporary, with a variation in the roof style and with three basic elevations," says Alex Holmquist, architectural manager for Maracay Homes. "That's what everybody was using for an awful lot of years and everything was starting to look really similar."

With the turn of the century, many people began to long for the comforting environment of yesteryear and more personable, friendly home environments and neighborhoods. This yearning helped inspire a trend toward more vintage architectural styles.

Elevation renovation

Patrick McGlone, director of architecture for T.W. Lewis, says that he has seen a definite change in the design approach to exterior elevations.

"We are seeing a return to more architecture up front with the garage de-emphasized to the back of the lot," he says. "Even if the garage is just 6 to 8 feet behind the living areas, that still



T.W. Lewis

History and geography impact the architecture of new homes in the Valley. The influx of residents from the Midwest and East made Craftsman style more desirable. Western European traditions also influence local designs.

allows for a better street scene. We have several plans that feature a rear garage and a people-friendly front porch or courtyard. It's all part of a return to traditional design."

Many other builders' newer developments also are significantly influenced by the familiarity of the past.

"For example, at Maracay, we always use a Prairie elevation, which is a variation of the Craftsman movement with simple building lines, hip roofs, long eave lines and horizontal window accents inspired by the arts and crafts movement of the 1920s," says Holmquist. "We also have a Ranch or Territorial Hacienda that has simple building shapes with rough sawn wood in posts and beams."

Mass appeal

Along with current events, pop culture influences the hankerings of homebuyers, as described by Randolph Kunzelmann, design director/associate with Bloodgood Sharp Buster Architects & Planners, an architectural firm that works with Maracay Homes and other builders.

"With the popularity of HGTV and other design-oriented shows and magazines, the images of home in the hearts and minds of homebuyers are those from their childhood memories," Kunzelmann says. "They remember the Sunday afternoon visit to the historic Craftsman or Spanish Bungalow home that grandma lived in.

Just look at the prices in any historic district in the country to see the value we apply to these homes and neighborhoods."

The Valley's growth also has contributed to the architectural change.

"There are a lot of people moving into Arizona from the East or the Midwest," says Doug Rusk, licensed architect and senior designer for Pulte Homes. "Because of that, some styles like Farmhouse and the Bungalow Craftsman are used here because those people see it as a comfort and a familiar face."

Inspired by history

But it's not all nostalgia that is influencing architectural styles. It's also history and what materials will withstand our

harsh desert climate.

Rusk says that historical precedent drives an awful lot of the predominant styles here.

"Spanish is obviously very popular and Tuscan is the current trend, but that means a lot of things to different people," he explains. "For the most part, the materials are what define it. That type of Italian farmhouse look uses a lot of exposed stone, a lot of heavier timber and often incorporates outdoor courtyards. All of that fits in with Arizona living and climate."

McGlone agrees that our environment and history are deeply influenced by Spanish Colonial styles. "These materials and styles work very well in the desert. We do see some Craftsman, but we don't see much Cottage or Territorial. Prairie is very popular and Tuscan is very big because people gravitate to that Old World look. We also have a great deal of courtyards because that inside/outside living style is really well received."

While the future is hard to predict, McGlone thinks roof lines will probably stay the same. But what might change is the way we utilize window groups and window styling. "Another trend we're seeing is that a lot of lofts are coming back into play. That could reflect some of the urbanization going on in housing, and we might see more storefronts coming down the road."