

Bathrooms – the new retreat?

What was once one of the most utilitarian rooms in the home, is now being transformed into a personal retreat by many homeowners. Some bathrooms have additions such as entertainment centres, home spas, heated floors, subdued lighting and even fireplaces. Recent renovation trends indicate that people are spending a large amount of their remodelling dollars on the master bathroom. Here are some of the ways bathrooms are changing:

- **TUBS.** Freestanding tubs are making a comeback. But they are now updated with such features as heated backrests, soft, cushioned surfaces and whirlpools for luxury soaks.
- The thing that matters most about a tub, however, is that it is comfortable. Also consider how quickly it fills. High-flow faucets may be necessary and some large tubs also require an extra water heater. One of the newest designs is a deep, rectangular tub for soaking. Like an infinity pool, water continuously overflows all sides into a built-in channel where it is reheated and effervesced (creating a bubble massage) and then recirculated into the tub. This luxury bathtub even has a chromatherapy feature, which alters the colour of built-in lights to create different moods.
- **SHOWERS.** Seamless glass showers with minimal framing are popular and can make a small bathroom seem larger. Some showers are upright spas and deliver hydro massage through a series of whirlpool jets arranged vertically while steam showers use a humidifying steam generator to produce a warm aura of relaxing water vapour. A more affordable way to update a shower is in the range of showerheads that are available. These showerheads deliver a wide variety of spray effects...everything from a vigorous massage to a soft rain shower to a tropical downpour to a waterfall. Multiple showerheads, often with multiple sprays in each head, are also popular. There are even showerheads designed just for children.
- **FAUCETS.** Polished chrome has a long track record as a durable faucet finish that won't scratch or corrode. Nickel, though, is becoming increasingly popular and is available in brushed, satin, matte and hammered finishes. And then there is oil-rubbed bronze, brass, copper, pewter...a broad array of designer finishes. Wall-mounted faucets are gaining in popularity because they free up counter space and make cleaning around the sink easier. They do, however, require special installation behind the wall and cannot easily replace an existing deck-mounted faucet.
- **FLOORS.** Floors warmed by pipes are not new in bathroom design. One of the newer and less expensive versions, though, involves a thin electric mat embedded with wires (something like an electric blanket), which sits under the flooring material. Most companies have many standard designs and some will customize a mat to fit curves and angles. These mats are the easiest system to install and are energy saving as only one section of the floor is warmed. Another option is a system of cables attached underneath the entire flooring area (like wall-to-wall carpeting). These cables take more effort to install but they ensure even warmth throughout the room.

STRONG DEMAND CONTINUES TO DRIVE SALES

Although sales in February dipped slightly compared to last February, it is still a healthy market. The Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver reported a total of 2,941 sales in February, down just 4.1% from 3,068 sales one year ago but up 52.8% over sales in January 2006.

The Lower Mainland market is a consistent market as strong demand for real estate continues to drive housing sales. More than 66% of homes sold in February were under the overall average price of \$490,004.

Property values show continuing increases year over year. The benchmark price of a detached home in Greater Vancouver in February increased to \$598,989 up 21.8% from one year ago, the benchmark price of a townhome was \$364,114, up 15.9%, while the apartment benchmark price increased to \$297,192, up 22.6% compared to February 2005.

Sources: www.styleathome.com, www.ebuild.com, www.arrivenet.com

Call me if you are considering a move or if you have any questions about the market.

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