

# In the bedroom

A look at hot trends in today's sleeping quarters

By **Shari Held**  
Special to *IBJ*

Most people view their home as a place to relax and unwind from their fast-paced lifestyles. And what area of the house is more amenable to offering privacy, comfort and relaxation than the master bedroom?

According to experts in the homebuilding and residential design business, demand is high for a master bedroom that is functional, comfortable and luxurious.

## Downstairs demand

For a growing segment of the population, typically empty-nesters, comfort equates first and foremost to a master bedroom on the first level. Some builders say it's the hottest trend in residential design.

"It's the trend I notice more than anything," said John Williamson, sales consultant for Trinity Homes LLC, a division of Atlanta-based Beazer Homes USA Inc. Trinity built 690 homes last year with an average price of \$178,000, including lots.

"I would estimate that 15 to 20 percent of the people coming through the door are looking for a master bedroom down," Williamson said, "with 80 percent of the people in the 50-year-and-older demographic looking for either a master bedroom down or a ranch."

Sam Schernekau, director of sales for Westfield-based RDJ Custom Homes, the area's second-largest custom-home builder, expects the master-down trend to grow even stronger in the next few years.

But no matter where it's located, the master bedroom is hot. "Right now, the two most important areas of the house are the kitchen/heartroom and the master suites," Schernekau said.



Bedrooms in new homes are getting bigger and better than

## Sizing it up

Buyers are placing more emphasis on master bedrooms today, experts say.

"We are seeing other spaces in the home start to downsize, but the master bedroom continues to be an extraordinarily important space, probably more so than any of the public entertainment spaces in the home," said Robert Frist, president of Rowland Design Inc., a regional architectural firm headquartered in Indianapolis. "Bedrooms have become a place of sanctuary and escape. They're not just a place to sleep anymore."

A few years ago, sitting rooms adjacent to the master bedroom became a popular item. Frist said he expected a swing away from sitting rooms, but he hasn't seen it yet.

"People use them as a private space to

have a cocktail, a conversation or to read," he said, adding such spaces are also used for solariums or libraries.

According to Schernekau, separate sitting rooms are being replaced by sitting areas in the master bedroom and the space once allotted for them is being used for larger, more luxurious bathrooms and walk-in closets.

## Better bathrooms

"The shower takes precedence," said Frist. "It's a form of bathing and also relaxation. And most of the showers accommodate the couple. The tub is optional. Typically it is just there for soaking. It's not a bathing venue so much but another way to relax."

Large walk-in showers with dual showerheads, some sporting rain-head or massage nozzles and built-in seating, are a very popular trend.

But that doesn't mean tubs are on the way out.

"Depending on the price range and

age group, many people are putting in the larger tubs and using them," said Peter Ruffing, vice president of operations for Indianapolis-based Executive Homes Inc., which built 34 custom homes last year with an average price of \$375,000, not including lots. "With the advent of aromatherapy, candles and spa-like features, master baths are becoming romantic retreats even more than they have been in the past. Today's bathrooms are places where people can kick back and spoil themselves. They're not afraid to say, 'it's about us right now.'"

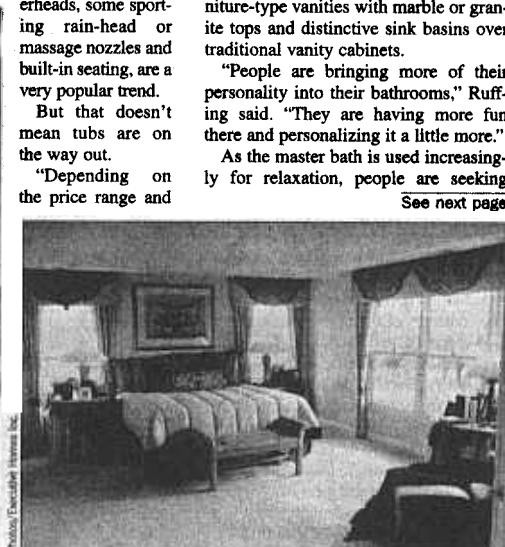
Details, like satin-nickel fixtures, oversized accent tile and marble and granite counter tops, add to the ambiance of the bath.

Many upscale homebuyers opt for furniture-type vanities with marble or granite tops and distinctive sink basins over traditional vanity cabinets.

"People are bringing more of their personality into their bathrooms," Ruffing said. "They are having more fun there and personalizing it a little more."

As the master bath is used increasingly for relaxation, people are seeking

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Big luxurious bathtubs, custom cabinetry and distinctive details are important to today's home buyers, who aren't afraid to spoil themselves, says Peter Ruffing of Executive Homes Inc.

more privacy and separation in the area. "The trend is doing separate 'his and hers' vanity areas in the bathroom so the woman has her own private area to put on her makeup," said Ernie Dollard, superintendent for R.J. Klein and Associates, the fifth-largest custom-home builder in Indianapolis. Dollard said customers are also requesting separate "his and hers" commodes, each enclosed in a room private from the bathing area.

### Getting undressed

The "his and hers" theme carries over to the closet space. "Everyone is going to larger walk-in closets—major walk-in closets and dressing areas," said Dollard. He indicated requests are up by 70 percent for larger walk-in closets with built-in drawers and shelves to accommodate all apparel.

"It's a big trend," agreed Schernekau. "People are getting away from dressers and other furniture in the master."

Frist said he's seeing fewer requests for closets and more for "his and hers" dressing rooms outfitted with millwork and cabinetry on a par with other portions of the home. "As busy as people are, I think dressing rooms are a response to the need to be highly organized, making the process of dressing simple and pleasurable," he said.

### Setting the mood

"People are interested in non-intrusive inclusion of technology in the bedroom," Frist said. "Televisions, security systems, sound systems—all are very much at

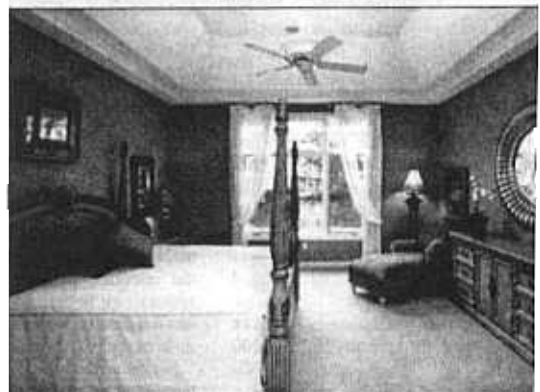


hand and easy to use, but hidden."

Ruffing noted that people are increasingly using integrated sound systems in the master bedroom and bath. "Putting music through the speakers in the bedroom and bath tickles all the senses and helps people get into that kind of luxurious spa-type mode," he said.

When it comes to the bedroom, luxury is key. People are opting for elegant and costlier details, such as intricate crown moldings, vaulted or tray ceilings, recessed lighting, frieze carpeting, columns, plant shelves and fountains that provide peace and tranquility in the bedroom. Maybe that's not so unusual considering it is the place our days both begin and end.

*In addition to more master bedrooms on the ground floor, home builders are seeing more demand for extensive dressing rooms and walk-in closets.*



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