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Conceptualizing the DREAM

Just imagine for a moment that you could have the perfect Southwest home... one that fulfills both your most inspired dream and your daily lifestyle, which may not always be the same. We asked Lee Hutchison, CEO and principal architect of Urban Design Associates, Ltd., what his clients seek in what may be the third or fourth private residence in their personal portfolio of homes around the nation.

"Our clients are savvy buyers and usually have a clear concept of the home as well as a general list of essential living spaces," says Hutchison, an ASU-trained custom home architect with more than 30 years experience that provides him with a sage wisdom his clients respect. He advises that secondary bedrooms are now expanding and multiplying to include bedroom suite for aging parents as well as grandchildren. Extended families also seek larger formal dining rooms sized to accommodate the entire family with seating for 12 as the new standard.

Family home entertainment centers or media rooms continue to be in vogue, yet only half his clients request wine rooms or chill room storage. Gourmet kitchens, whether a couple cooks or not, are still in demand though exercise rooms are waning in popularity. The majority of Hutchison's active buyers, most aged 60-plus, opt to either enjoy the benefits of their communities' substantial fitness center or stay trim hitting the links. Extensive outdoor living areas and kitchens are primarily equipped for resale value with many including large prep areas and out-of-sight secondary kitchens designed to meet the needs of caterers.

"I haven't built a home in at least 10 years that did not include a home office," adds Hutchison. Today's buyers now seek separate his and hers home offices that are fully automated along with the rest of the home. Integrated audio, security, lighting, heating and cooling, Internet and sound systems are in a constant state of improvement making it hard to recommend one system before another comes on line to top it. Energy-efficient green homes are also a signature of Urban Design Associates' homes.

Hutchison notes that the Valley of the Sun offers the most diverse architectural options to be found in the Southwest, overshadowing hot markets such as Las Vegas and Palm Springs. "We've got it all right here including Adobes such as the Organic Pueblo and Territorial styles for which our firm is known, as well as Tuscan, Mediterranean, Santa Barbara and Contemporary," adds the designer who has yet to find the time to design and build his own dream home. "We finally have a lot in Flagstaff tucked away for our retirement home," he says with a wistful smile. It's a home which is bound to include a gourmet kitchen for Lee and his wife and business partner, Lauren, both accomplished chefs.

Urban Design Associates, Ltd., Lee Hutchison, udaltd.com



Keith Alstrim Photography

