



# Woman-Centric Matters™

” Women are the target market for homebuilders! That revelation meant expanding Design Basic’s home plan development research from discussions with building pros throughout the country to talking with home buyers directly. By the Spring of 2003, Design Basic’s began an ongoing series of consumer focus groups with women of all ages and backgrounds from around the country.

When it came to the topic of home plans, a revelation emerged that would change our course. Rather than starting with the elevation when looking at home plans, women often began by looking at floor plans. Which begged the question, “How do women look at home plans?” As we delved into this topic, we learned women look at a plan to determine “how the home lives.” Further research helped us realize there were four primary filters through which women evaluate designs: how the home entertains; how the home helps her de-stress; the flexibility of the home’s design; and the home’s ability to address her storage needs.

## ENTERTAINING

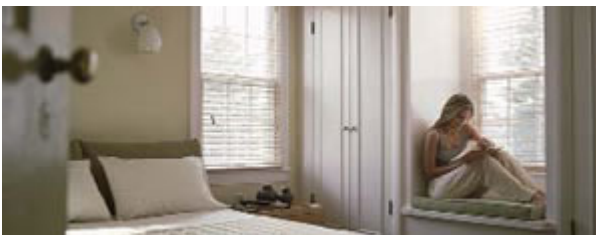


Whether formal or casual, entertaining often involves food, so the kitchen becomes the hub of activity. Women feel a kitchen entertains well if it is open to other entertaining areas, including dining spaces, the great room and outdoor living spaces. It should also eliminate clutter by providing plenty of organized storage where it is needed.

With a growing emphasis on casual entertaining, outside entertaining should be a natural extension of your home’s flow. Covered porches are especially appreciated if inclement weather threatens your outdoor plans. For some, adding screens around the porch to control bugs means being able to truly enjoy being outside. Still others will opt for windows all around, turning their outdoor living space into a true four-season room.

When it comes to media-related entertaining, the first issue to settle is where the big screen TV goes. Wall-mounted plasma and LCD monitors are eliminating the need for deep built-in entertainment centers, while surround sound systems are being discreetly installed within walls and ceilings – a very woman-centric approach because she no longer has to decorate her home around the entertainment electronics.

## DE-STRESSING



Research suggests that stress is the most compelling theme for women. They want their home to be their sanctuary, their personal retreat. So we asked women to identify how they like to relax at home. The most frequent response was soaking in a tub. Yet women were fairly evenly split over where they wanted the tub (not necessarily in the master bath) because many acknowledged that they rarely had time to actually enjoy a bath.

When asked to choose between a master bath offering a standard (4-foot) shower plus a tub or a bathroom with

an oversized shower and no tub, most women admitted they would get more use out of the shower, especially one with a spa showering system or at least two shower heads. An outdoor living space was the second most common response to the question of where women de-stress. Some home designs may show an ornamental front porch that looks nice but is too small to be of any practical value.

Porches, patios and decks need to be big enough to be usable!

Our research also revealed nothing is more stressful for Moms than getting the entire family out the door on time in the morning, with everything they need. This discovery led to designing rear foyers offering solutions such as drop zones (see “Storing” section), a bench for removing shoes and even lockers for the children. Kids know how to use lockers to quickly grab their lunch money, backpacks, gym clothes and jackets as they dash out the door.

As we’ve become increasingly comfortable with family and friends coming into our homes through the garage, women are becoming adamant that the rear foyer entrance not double as the laundry room. (Having people traipse past dirty laundry increases stress levels!)

When it came to de-stressing activities, other oft-mentioned responses included reading or privately watching a little TV (accompanied by requests for a sitting area in the master bedroom or a cozy hearth room), working out (answered by an exercise room) or pursuing hobbies (ideally an “out of public view” spot– not the dining room table).

## FLEXIBLE-LIVING



Women are more likely than men to consider how a home will meet their family’s needs in the future. This is especially true for baby boomers, the so-called “sandwich generation,” who often find themselves caring for aging parents or welcoming adult children back home for a time. Home plans with a pair of adjacent secondary bedrooms shown as an optional guest suite score highly with baby boomers because they provide both private sleeping and living

spaces.

A significant number of today’s buyers are blended families. These buyers are especially interested in home plans that provide suitable bathroom arrangements for boys and girls coming from different families.

When it comes to sharing a bathroom, at a minimum, women in these families are looking for a compartmented bath with the toilet/shower area separate from the lavs. Private vanities are even better. An emerging trend may well be private 1/2 baths with only the tub/shower space shared. With more and more couples working from home, we’re hearing complaints from women trying to share an office with their husbands. Whether adapting a spare bedroom, converting the dining room or carving out enough space for a pocket office, his-and-her offices are in demand.

Women worry about their family literally outgrowing their home. The solution? Offering unfinished areas, especially on a second level or over a garage or in a basement. Families can configure these spaces as the need arises, without adding the cost of finishing them into the mortgage up front.

## STORING



Because many women consider clutter a significant source of stress due to their home's inadequate storage space and disorganization, we're designing more storage than ever before. As a nation, we're cooking less, but not eating less. That means an increasing need for storage of prepared foods. When we do cook, we have more small appliances to make it easier— which requires extra space for the bread maker, indoor grill, food processor and crock pot. No wonder

women are asking for larger, better organized pantries.

We're eliminating unsightly clutter from keys, newspapers, mail, change and cell phones dropped on the kitchen table or island – by including a drop zone near the entry from the garage. Drop zones can also incorporate a recharging center for cell phones and the video camera, a tall space for hanging umbrellas and a cork board or write-on board for messages.