

MANSION GLOBAL

Five Checklist Items to Include If You're Building a New Home

BY ANNE MACHALINSKI ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON JUNE 09, 2017 | MANSION GLOBAL



For people who have decided to build rather than buy a new luxury property, the first step—as is the case in all real estate decisions—is to secure the perfect location. While this can mean completely different things depending on the market, good access to transportation and a city center and unobstructed views of whatever the area is known for—whether that’s the Empire State Building or Central Park in Manhattan, rolling hills dotted with vineyards or olive groves in Tuscany, or gorgeous sunsets over the Aegean Sea in Mykonos—are usually key.

With location settled, there are a handful of checklist items that experts generally agree every new home builder should include to ensure a high resale value. All of them, said Sandra Adomatis, a Florida-based appraiser, mean looking toward the future, in which buyers will be more tech-savvy, won’t care about what’s trendy today, and might have a different family set-up, with live-in elderly parents or post-collegiate 20-somethings to consider.

“If you want a new home to retain its value,” she said, “you need to build for tomorrow’s buyer.”

Build a home that fits into its surroundings

Heather Witt, a Los Angeles-based Douglas Elliman broker, sees many developers or individuals building new homes make a mistake from the get-go that can negatively impact resale value: they forget to consider the location in which they're building.

If there is a neighborhood known for its Spanish-style homes, for instance, steer clear of building a big mid-century modern home in the middle of it, she said. "A lot of times people are attracted to a neighborhood for its specific aesthetic," she said. "If you build outside of that aesthetic, you might lower the resale value of your home."

Monique Sofo, the vice president of strategy at Christie's International Real Estate and author of their annual "Luxury Defined" report, added that in addition to staying true to the location, architectural provenance, meaning hiring someone who's going to design a high-quality, timeless home, is also important for the upper echelon of luxury buyers.

"They see buying a home designed by an acclaimed architect as an opportunity to own an architectural collectible, and live in a piece of art," she said.

In many second-home markets in Europe, like the south of France, Tuscany, Venice and the Greek Islands, it's often not possible to build completely new, so buyers instead purchase old properties and then refurbish them. But this rule applies to the renovation process, too, experts say.

"You want to retain a structure's unique features," said Lynne Davie, a broker with Beauchamp Estates, who sells properties in Florence and Tuscany, "and never want to take away its sense of place."

In Tuscany, where there are a lot of classic farmhouses, that means restoring the exterior and interior stone features, and when possible, keeping the original beams in the ceiling, the wood burning oven in the kitchen, and terracotta on floors and walls. "As soon as you start changing these things," she said, "you take the heart out of the property."

Regardless of the location, every buyer wants a solid WiFi connection throughout their home, whether that's a large London flat or a sprawling Greek villa. Most buyers are also going to want to take advantage of some smart home features, so it's best to include that wiring from the start, experts say.

In Manhattan, Douglas Elliman broker Frances Katzen said buyers expect a fully wired home in which there are built-in speakers and a system where they can play their music from an iPhone or other mobile device; cameras and other security features that they can turn on and off and manage remotely; a Nest thermostat to manage heating and cooling, plus the ability to control blinds, the media center and other features with the touch of a finger.

Jane Gol, the president of Continental Ventures and Continental Pinewood, who is co-developing the Barn & Vine properties in Bridgehampton, New York, calls what most buyers want an "expandable smart home," meaning one that is wired for today's systems, but able to adapt as technology evolves.

In London, the head of residential development at Knight Frank, Ian Marris, agreed that while wiring for integrated systems is an essential feature to include when building a new property, including an overly sophisticated system is not. "The system itself needs to be simple enough for the occupant to use it," Mr. Marris said.

In more remote, second-home destinations, total smart home wiring might not be possible—and its absence is not often a deal breaker, said Mirka Mikleticova, a sales negotiator with Beauchamp Estates in the south of France. But for some of her international clients, specifically those from Russia and the Middle East, lack of intelligent security systems is. “Security is a huge selling point,” she said.