

SRES[®] MARKETPLACE

CONSUMER NEWSLETTER

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Tomorrow's House: Pandemic-inspired Design

Many who were cooped up at home during the pandemic gave lots of thought to their homes – features they loved, hated, and wished for.

That fresh take on their home's function and aesthetics could change people's expectations for the long pull, and you may start seeing pandemic-inspired features showing up in homes or find buyers asking for them.

The America at Home Study (<https://bit.ly/39BrG8R>) sheds light on how people view their homes and shows a clear shift in homeowners' preferences and needs.

The study was conducted in two waves, once in April 2020 and then in October 2020. The nearly 7,000 responses from homeowners and renters gave researchers a look at consumers' changing sentiments as the pandemic progressed.

In addition, this year, a design and construction team collaborated and built a concept house based on the study findings.

Marketing expert Teri Slavik-Tsuyuki of tst ink, consumer strategist Belinda Sward of Strategic Solutions Alliance, and architect Nancy Keenan, president and CEO of Dahlin Group Architecture Planning, did the first study, and the second was enhanced with Kantar's MindBase's consumer attitudinal and generational segmentation.

Comfort, safety, adaptability

Here are some study highlights.

The top responses to questions about people's idea of the home were a safe place, family, and comfort.

More than 30% want home office space for more than one person and adaptable space.

Couples with kids are willing to pay for better home offices with doors and better soundproofing.

People are looking for nature and open spaces, dog parks, and small neighborhood parks in their communities.

Covid-19 has made renters more interested in owning a home, and they – from Millennials to Baby Boomers – overwhelmingly prefer single-family detached homes.

During the pandemic, homeowners also started eyeing their garages for non-car uses, including:

- Additional storage (78%)
- Home gym/exercise (74%)
- Home office/workspace (70%)
- Craft/game areas (67%)
- Pet grooming areas (67%)

What's missing?

Study respondents also identified what they found lacking in their current homes.

What's missing that you would like to have and are willing to pay for in your next home?

	April 2020	October 2020
Greater technology/energy efficiency	53%	56%
Better equipped kitchen for cooking	47%	52%
Germ-resistant countertops and flooring	55%	50%
Laundry room off the garage	22%	33%

The Concept Home

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Architects, builders, and researchers took the America at Home Study findings and designed and built The America at Home Study Concept Home: Barnaby, located in Chatham Park in Pittsboro, N.C. In it, they incorporated homeowners' new pandemic-generated preferences.

Chatham Park is a multigenerational, master planned community set on more than 7,000 acres, and it's a spot that delivers access to the nature and fresh air that people craved during lockdowns. Nearly one-third – 2,000 acres – of the community will be parks or open spaces.

The team included the Dahlin Group Architecture Planning, the architect, and Garman Homes, the builder.

Rather than looking at specific features, the team designed the house to address survey respondents' "life challenges." The result is a two-story 2,600-sq.-ft. house with four bedrooms and 3.5 bathrooms that's focused on five key home life areas: arrive, eat, recharge, work, and breathe.

Flex space

The home design is highly flexible and can address people's needs today and serve different lifestyles – families with kids or work-from-home childless couples, for example – and allow the house to evolve as residents' lives, needs, and families change.

For example, an entrance off the garage provides a drop zone for groceries, boots, kids' gear, and so forth. A touchless faucet and laundry facility address people's current concern about washing hands and sanitizing upon arriving home. It's a space that works for a family but also could be ideal for a frontline hospital worker who wants to change clothes and wash up before entering the main home to avoid introducing outside germs.

Rooms upstairs were also designed with adaptability in mind. Bedrooms built without closets can quickly adapt to new uses, for example. Today's nursery and play spaces for kids can evolve into a teenager's bedroom. Later, empty nesters can create a media room, library, or art space.

A Zoom room off the kitchen and a pocket office on the second floor give homeowners work-at-home options. But if the pocket office isn't useful, residents could convert it to a laundry room, meditation space, or something else.

Guests get their own suite, featuring a separate entrance from the outside, a private bathroom, and a fridge and coffee maker. The space also could be used as a quarantine room or to accommodate a nanny or a caretaker.

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A yard, several outdoor spaces, and access to Chatham Park's nature beyond the home's property deliver on residents' need for fresh air, relaxation, and recharging outdoors.

The garage features flooring and outlets to make an on-site gym possible.

Learn more about the Barnaby House and visit the interactive online tour of the house at <https://bit.ly/3EAzANS>. It may provide inspiration and ideas on how you can adapt your own place or features to look for in your future home.

For more about pandemic-inspired home design and decor, see the SRES blog.

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