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Learn from the Past, Look to the **Details** to Precisely **Nail** **Curb** Appeal

By Beverly Smirnis

Millennial homebuyers are better read and educated, or at least consider themselves to be, and will jump on an opportunity to tell you so. So what are they looking for? Where do the trends stem from? And what is next on the horizon?

Rejection of Supersized American Culture

It's true that millennials witnessed all the remodeling activity and tear-downs to undo an era where eclectic style got so out of hand that elements of Victorian, Colonial, French Eclectic, and Federal architecture were often combined together into a hodgepodge. McMansions became the term used to describe the homes built in an embarrassing decade or so of architectural history in some of our cities. Millennials were taught that waste is a sin, and we have to agree, even though some of those mistakes have made a handsome living for the remodeling industry in the 21st century.

A rejection of supersized American culture began to develop in the early 2000s. Enter the Tiny House. Cheers to the young generation who at least owned some kind of real estate. But now, the millennials are getting to the age where they have more responsibilities, and they need way more space. To address affordability issues as single-family home prices continue to rise, you've seen most of the production builders offer a townhome product. It's perhaps here, in the townhome realm, that we may most start to see the resurgence of traditional styles. (Think historic brownstones.

Modern and Iterations of Modern Express a Changing World

Combine the rise of the smart home with resistance to clutter and ornamentation and we ushered in a minimalistic modern home design phase, which has been in vogue for some years now. Simple, square horizontal and vertical elements are still chic to some while others dub the trend as "a gray, colorless, catalog look." In an attempt to warm up and personalize things a bit, we have explored Hollywood Glam, Midcentury Modernism, and Modern Farmhouse, the latter popularized by HDTV to such an extent that we all had to take notice.

Make an Authentic Statement

So, the answers to the questions posed about what's in, what's out and why, are a bit unclear. Just pick your style and get the style-defining details right—rooflines, entries, and porches—to create the intended architectural style, and you've got curb appeal that will entice the buyers in! Home visualization tools and 3D modeling are widely available and worth the effort to ensure a great end result.

Pay close attention to the home's entrance, where the specific roof, eave, and overhang treatments are clearly visible; focus here on your opportunity to define the style. The front door should always make a statement. Think of the porch as its picture frame, but way more—be sure the porch serves a purpose in being usable, large enough for seating, a porch swing, etc. Spend extra money and attention on windows and front-facing garage doors.

Choose Durable Products and Think Outside the Box

Brick Industry Association (BIA) member manufacturers say white and limewashed exteriors are the latest and lend themselves to all styles. Painted brick is also becoming regionally popular. The BIA concedes that mixed materials are super hot—combine brick with metal, steel or glass, and especially wood. This has made siding that looks like wood a huge focus. Fiber cement, engineered wood, and composite panels are some of your options.

But beyond the norms, there are a number of other options emerging for wall cladding. Consider Arcitell's patented fiber-reinforced polymer panels providing a wide variety of aesthetics from traditional looks like stone, brick, and cedar to contemporary looks like metals, tile, and marble. Or check out architectural-grade zinc cladding panels, offered by Rheinzink America, that can be used for roofs (including a standing seam option), but also for wall cladding. When zinc is exposed to the moisture and carbon dioxide that is present in our atmosphere, a protective layer of zinc carbonate forms on its surface, prohibiting the corrosion process that steel experiences. The resulting zinc-carbonate layer creates a beautiful bluish patina for a very desirable appearance.

Be sure to compare the fire rating, wind load performance, impact resistance, and insulating value in deciding between the many available options in cladding products.

Top it Off with The Right Roofing Choice

There are many reasons to consider asphalt or synthetic shake shingles. They can offer the look of wood shakes or slate at a lower cost with greater durability and are available in two-piece designs offering depth, dimension, and variation that make it hard to distinguish the substitutes for the real thing. Many manufacturers now apply both a permanent primer and a durable topcoat to their shingles, under ideal factory conditions and with controlled drying and curing, making them resistant to fire, moisture, and algae.

Concrete roof tiles are another premium option. And now, advanced digital printing technology creates another option—porcelain roof tiles. Metal roofing products with "cool chemistry" finishes that reduce energy bills while negating mold or algae growth are also popular and in keeping with some of the current home designs.

After considering style and performance qualities, look to the user-friendly aspects in narrowing down your final roofing choice. Partner with a manufacturer offering install methodology that cuts labor time. Ask about sealants applied to bottom edges to protect against wind uplift, and about energy-efficient matting material that is used underneath.



DAKO HarmonyLine Window and Door Joinery Sets offer a contemporary set of windows, doors, gates, and roller shutters to make essential elements match beautifully.



Classic Craft® Visionary Collection™ walnut-grained flush fiberglass doors walk the line between retro and contemporary while embracing minimalist details on a premium scale.



Glen-Gery, one of the largest brickmakers in North America, has launched its very first ceramic façade cladding system, Terraçade. Driven by both performance and design, Terraçade products are made from natural clay material that is highly durable and energy-efficient.



Fortress Building Products' Apex CBPVC cladding features a bamboo cellular PVC core that allows for minimal expansion and contraction. Each board undergoes a proprietary tri-extrusion and dual embossing to emulate the appearance of hardwood.



New black soffit from Royal® Building Products creates a distinctive accent for the modern farmhouse.

The Bottom Line: Meyers Research says that buyers rank curb appeal second only to interior lifestyle design in their list of priorities for a new home. Keep studying the millennial buyer and never tire of learning their mindset. The main point is that they seek clearly recognizable and authentic design; let them argue amongst themselves about which one is the best. Just be sure to do your job in nailing the intended style to a tee.

Beverly Smirnis is the co-founder of Building Savvy magazine and publishes its flagship Dallas/Fort Worth edition. She and her business partner and husband, Steve Smirnis, have served as judges for the International Builders' Show Best of IBS Awards and judged numerous homes for builders association parade events across the country.