

QUEENSLAND 2010

Our homes are being transformed as our lifestyles change, writes Sandra Killen

FIVE years ago, Tuscan-style homes were all the rage, rumpus rooms and pergolas were must-haves and stainless-steel benchtops were gaining popularity.

An average three-bedroom house in the suburbs was \$200,000, and small-lot housing was a relatively new concept.

Today, the Tuscan style is dead, everyone wants an indoor/outdoor room and stainless steel has proved its durability.

House prices have more than doubled and land size of 405sq m is common.

So how will it be in an other five years?

Well, for a start, housing prices are not likely to double again.

A recent Westpac study predicted the present flat housing market could continue until 2010.

According to Housing Industry Association state executive director Rick Wiley, master-planned estates where houses are integrated with facilities such as shops, schools and parks would continue to lead the way in the future.

"The past five years have shown solid market demand for master-planned communities in North Lakes (on Brisbane's northside), Springfield and Forest Lake (in the city's western suburbs) and the Sunshine Coast," Wiley says.

"The idea that you have a block of land, build on it and have an instant community has proved very popular.

"It reflects how every city in the world has developed."

Wiley says Brisbane's western corridor will be the strong growth area in the next five years, and the southside and north around the Sunshine Coast would develop but the Gold Coast is limited with fewer large land holdings available.

In terms of the look of residential development, Wiley says housing evolves over a period of time, developing its own unique architectural style.

"You only have to drive along David Low Way on the Sunshine Coast to experience the changes in design and building methods," he says.

"People have started to mix up materials and use lightweight construction to achieve different styles."

Royal Australian Institute of Architects state president Dr Paula Whitman says that in the next five years the challenge is to stop building large, four-bedroom homes as big families are becoming fewer.

"At the moment, houses are getting bigger on blocks of land that are getting smaller, despite the changing demographic and the rise in the single-person household," she says.

"That does put pressure on people. There are no front yards, no back yards, no space left for anything, no capacity for building a community.

"We need communities with diversity of product to accommodate all different types of people.

"That includes social housing, housing for singles and the elderly."

Whitman says changes in the housing market won't be easy "because we tend to build what we know".

"As a myopic architect, I see it all as a matter of good design.

"We can't keep building what we have built in the past. It won't work to simply keep squishing houses in tighter.

"There is a lot of potential for more vibrant communities but people are afraid of the downside. They always fear change."

Sustainability is another key issue in the future of housing.

Architect Wayne Petrie, program director of the **Sustainable Homes** Program -- a joint venture with the State Government's housing department, the Environmental Protection Agency, the housing industry and local government -- predicts that in five years most discerning people will have rainwater tanks, water-saving taps and energy-efficient features in their homes.

"It will start with the keen gardeners who don't want to pay through the nose for town water," he says.

"But there is an emerging consciousness -- much of it led by young people who are learning about the environment at school -- about water and energy consumption.

"Clearly, the cost of energy is going to be an issue. People are becoming more conscious about seeing what they are consuming and what that means."

Petrie says technology such as smart monitoring -- a visual, wall-mounted display of a home's energy

usage -- is likely to become popular.

"We will get to the point where sustainability is going to be a critical part of being able to build a house and on-sell it," he says.

"Star energy ratings on houses are already in our society and we will see more of these changes."

Petrie says sustainable houses do not look any different from any other house in the street but were designed to be more beneficial to their occupants, the community and the environment, both in the short and long term.

"There are considerable comfort and investment benefits that can be achieved for home owners and renovators of **sustainable homes**," he says.

For first-home buyers, if last month's Housing Industry Association State Outlook was any indication, the forecast for the future was not bright.

The report found that from a low of just 12.7 per cent of the owner-occupier home lending market in March 2004, the proportion of first-home buyers inched back to 15.9 per cent in November but then slipped back to 13.7 per cent as at July this year.

"Housing affordability remains a very serious concern in Queensland, particularly southeast Queensland," the HIA reported.

"There is no sustainable recovery under way."

Tomorrow >>

What's happening in the regions: Cairns and Townsville

INSIDE out . . . the back deck has fallen out of favour with Queenslanders opting instead for a living space that links the inside and outside. 'Everyone wants outdoor living,' according to Matt Cooper, above, of Aspect Architecture. 'Gone are the days of the 3m deck. People now want an 8m x 5m space that can have a dining table and another seating area -- a living space in the true sense of the word -- that connects the house with the back yard.' In this Camp Hill house, owned by a couple with children, Cooper created an outdoor room 3.6m x 6m with motorised aluminium louvres. 'We are putting back yards into people's

houses,' Cooper says. 'People no longer want a deck on one level with stairs to the back yard.' He says the indoor/outdoor room will be one of the biggest changes in housing in the next five years and people would become more innovative with the rising costs of construction. Picture: Mark Cranitch

Caption: Matt Cooper, above, of Aspect Architecture has created an outdoor room 3.6m x 6m with motorised aluminium louvres in this Camp Hill house, owned by a couple with children

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