



# Fireplaces light up rooms, patios

In higher-end homes, buyers consider them ‘very important’

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Whether it’s built from brick, stone or sleek steel, a fireplace adds punch to a home’s design. And it probably leads the list of features that say “warm and cozy.”

In many new homes, the fireplace is found not only in the traditional family room or living room but also in other spaces inside and outside the house.

Consumer trend figures from the National Association of Home Builders underscore the fireplace’s popularity: 60 percent of homes constructed today have at least one. More than 25 percent of homes also include a fireplace or free-standing stove in a second area, often the master bedroom, the kitchen or an outdoor living area.



Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association

About 60 percent of homes constructed today have at least one fireplace, and more than 25 percent have one in a master bedroom, the kitchen or an outdoor living area.

A report this year from the National Association of Realtors indicates that for those purchasing new homes valued at \$250,000 or more, a fireplace was considered “very important.”

“Homebuilders today definitely aren’t underestimating the impact of a fireplace,” says Deidra Darsa of the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association.

“We’re seeing a turn toward a contemporary look. So while no one is abandoning the traditional brick fireplace, we are seeing more vertical fireplaces done with sleek stainless steel fronts.”

Some have controls that enable the homeowner to regulate the heat output; some even pull air from the room and then warm it.

Easy-to-maintain electric fireplaces may now be operated by remote control.

Meanwhile, portrait-style fireplaces, which resemble a wide-screen TV or framed artwork, are often built into walls, or even corners of higher-end homes — sometimes at eye level.

In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, fireplaces are typically standard in homes costing more than \$100,000. In an entry-level house, a modest brick fireplace is typical, often with a simple wood mantle or surround.

Contrast that with what you’ll find in a home by Jason Carter, owner of Jason Carter Custom Homes, which builds \$1 million-plus homes around Dallas:

“An outdoor fireplace is standard, usually done in the same façade as the house, either brick or stone.

We'll also do them in a living room or great room. And the newest thing is putting them in the 'morning room,' which is the latest name for a breakfast room. People love to have them in there."

Mr. Carter creates fireplaces out of a variety of materials. Limestone, he says, is an expensive and elite product but also very traditional. "Walk into any Highland Park house built 80 years ago, and chances are the original mantle was probably limestone or solid marble."

In a contemporary house, he recently used antique brick, which he says proved an ideal foil to the sleek lines and surfaces. "Antique brick has a story; it has a little more depth than something brand new, and the imperfections give it character."

Fireplaces "really are such a huge selling point," says Katie Smith of Grand Estates in Richardson, which positions its brick and stone fireplaces in a host of rooms, including the master bedroom. "It's one thing our customers just love."