

It” Kitchen Features

Houzz just identified the “it” kitchen features for the year.

So if a kitchen renovation is on your to-do list for 2017, take a look at the design trends Houzz from the “U.S. Houzz Kitchen Trends Study (<https://info.houzz.com/rs/804-JLJ-529/images/HouzzKitchenStudy2017.pdf>),” released in January.

Among the findings:

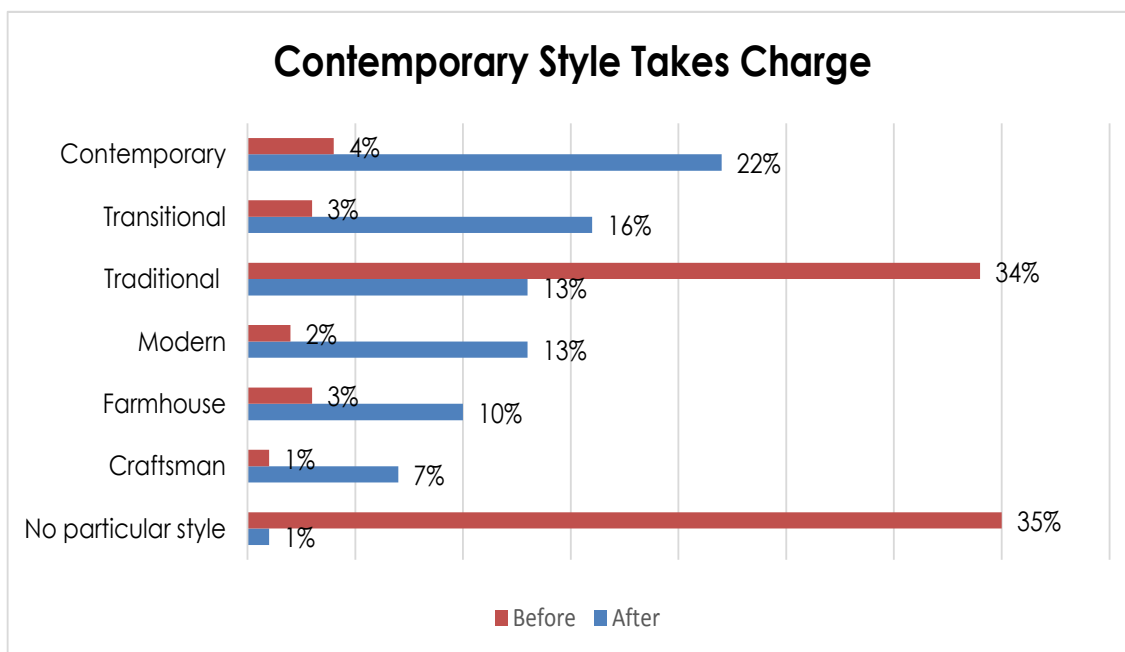
- Durable floors and countertops are top picks among all age groups.
- Gray is the top pick as a wall color.
- Stainless steel appliances continue to dominate.
- Great rooms are popular and over half of kitchens open to nearby rooms.

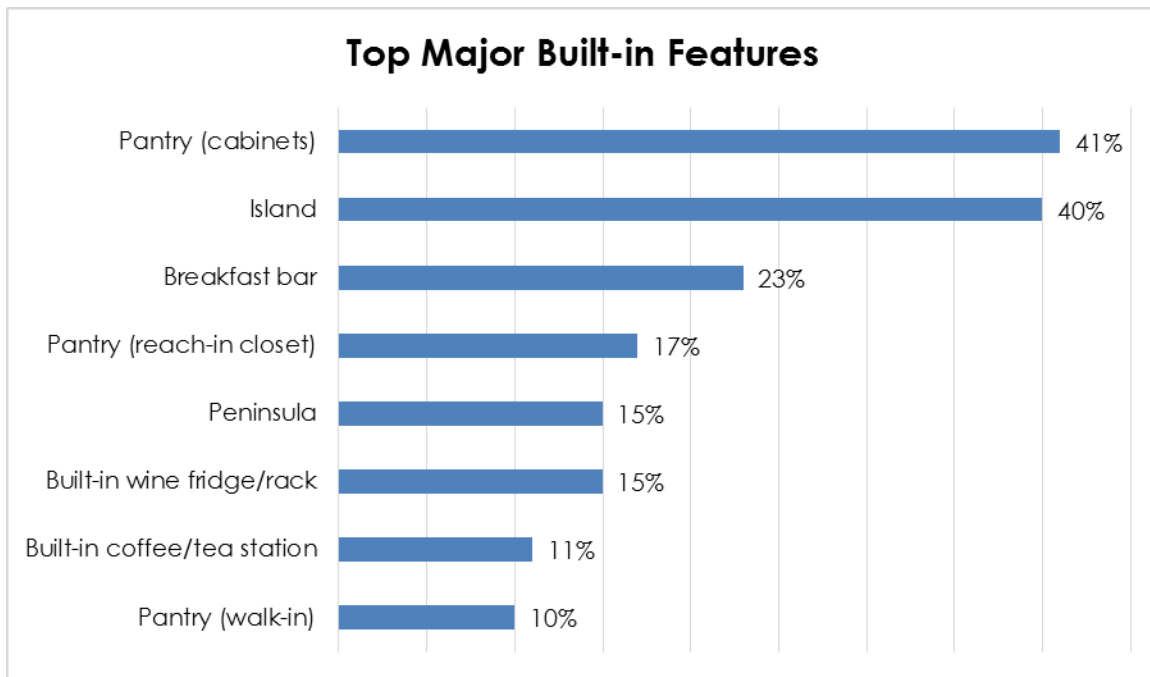
- Spending is on the rise and nearly one in 10 homeowners spent more than \$100,000 on a completed kitchen renovation in 2016. Twenty percent spent between \$50,000 and \$100,000.
- Custom cabinets are a top choice and 76 percent of survey respondents opt for built-in organizers to maximize the use of space.

The Houzz data are broken down in all sorts of useful ways. For example, you can see the kitchen styles and features that are most popular, along with the importance that various demographic groups place on features and upgrades so you can gear a kitchen renovation to your target buyer.

Here are a couple charts from the survey.

Contemporary Style Takes Charge





Student Loan Debt Can Diminish Your Golden Years

Crushing student loan debt is most associated with recent college grads.

But it turns out that seniors also are being affected and such debt has the potential to derail or diminish people's retirements.

Sometimes seniors are entering retirement with their own student loans. In other cases, they're haunted by loans they co-signed for their children.

The average amount of student loan debt owed by borrowers age 60 and older rose from \$12,100 to \$23,500 between 2005 and 2015. Nearly 40 percent of federal student loan borrowers age 65 and older are in default.

If you're in a similar position, your student debt obligations are another crucial figure to factor into your planning as you calculate retirement finances.

After all, the federal government can and has offset such borrowers' benefits to collect what's owed on those old federal student loans.

Learn more:

- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201701_cfpb_OA-Student-Loan-Snapshot.pdf and <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/four-tips-help-older-student-loan-borrowers-navigate-common-problems-their-student-loans/>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO): <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-45> and <http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/681722.pdf>

Retirement Happiness

Especially if you're on the brink of retirement or you find yourself floundering in retirement, here's something that is worth a read, "9 Keys To a Happy Retirement"

(<http://www3.forbes.com/investing/9-keys-to-a-happy-retirement/2/>).

It's no surprise that maintaining your health, developing a schedule, and finding a passion are crucial to contentment in retirement.



Sock Knitting Makes for Better Aging

They all have an adverse effect on aging well and happily and they can affect health and longevity.

Bob Rutherford, an 88-year-old from Saskatoon, found a hobby that combats all three.

Purpose: He created a machine for knitting socks and he already has made and donated 10,000 pairs of socks to Canadian shelters.

Loneliness and boredom: The knitting keeps him busy, and he has other friends – fellow seniors – who help out with the project.

Read his story and see a video here:
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/88-year-old-saskatoon-man-socks-1.3922778>

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Team Tiry Real Estate, LLC
1820 Brackett Ave, Eau Claire, WI 54701
TeamTiry.com
715-835-2129



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