

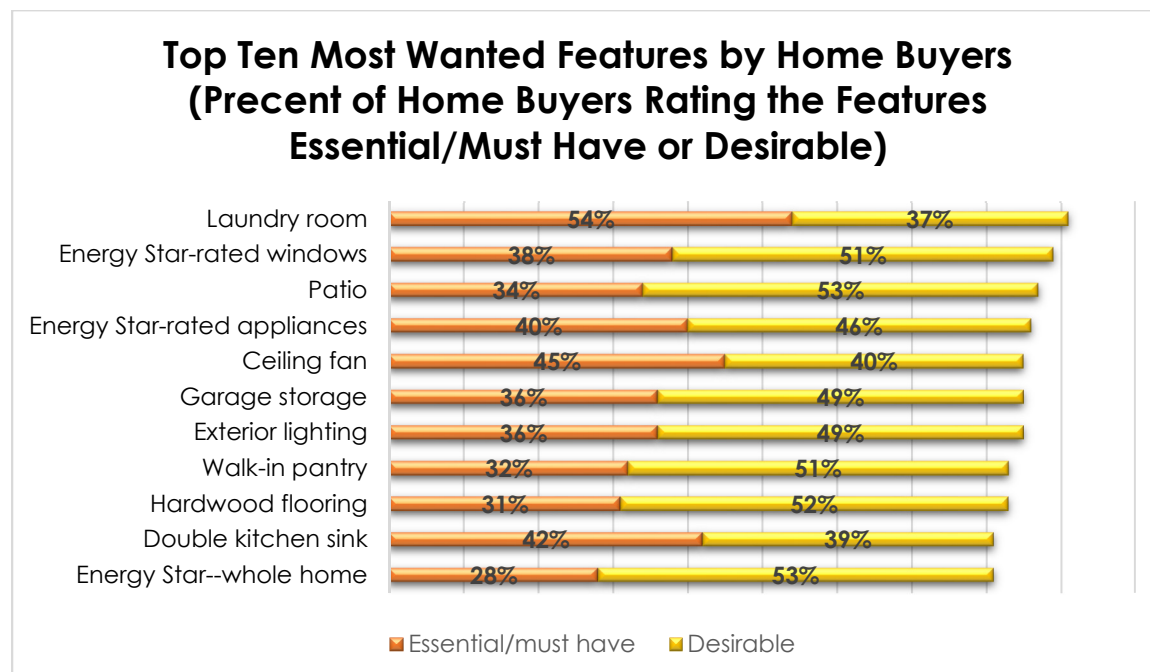
What Buyers Want

If you're thinking about putting in a wine cellar or installing an elevator in your house, you may want to reconsider.

But if Energy Star windows or a laundry room are on your to-do list, go ahead and put them in.

That's according to findings from the National Association of Homebuilders' *What Home Buyers Really Want*, a publication that looks at what tops home buyers' most (<http://bit.ly/2Ht6apo>) and least wanted lists.

The survey asked recent and prospective buyers about home and community features and asked them to rank feature as essential/must have, desirable, indifferent, and do not want.



It does give the green light on making green upgrades. Energy Star-rated windows, Energy Star-rated appliances, and the Energy Star rating for the whole home came in in first, second and third place, respectively, on respondents' Top Most Wanted Green Features (<http://bit.ly/2QfHjrH>)

Also on that list are efficient lighting, triple-pane insulating glass windows, insulation higher than required by code, and water-conserving toilets.

The survey also looked at the don'ts.

Beware of the other most unwanted items (<http://bit.ly/2Wi5prp>), including pet washing stations, dual toilets in the master bath, and laminate kitchen countertops.

Design for all. We can do better

Don Norman's Fast Company lament, "I wrote the book on user-friendly design. What I see today horrifies me" (<http://bit.ly/2YJoUH3>) falls into the "we can do better" category.

Norman, author of Design of Everyday Things and a former Apple vice president, talks about how the world "seems to be designed against the elderly."

Containers can't be opened, labels can't be read, restaurants are too loud, and technology products arrive without a manual.

He makes the case for better design, which is something that helps everyone, not just seniors.

Curb cuts aid seniors with mobility challenges as well as someone pushing a baby carriage or dragging a suitcase, for example. The option for high-contrast lettering on electronic devices could help seniors all the time and others when they're trying to read a text or email in bright sunlight.

And Norman asks why walker and canes have to be so ugly and look like medical devices. Why not make such devices stylish and elegantly designed?

Right. Why not?

An answer to affordability challenge

In so many U.S. and Canadian cities, the cost of homes puts homeownership out of reach, particularly for young buyers.

ATTOM Data Solutions (<https://tabsoft.co/2HG7hAU>) from March 2019, for example, shows that median home prices during the first quarter of 2019 weren't affordable for average wage earners in 335 of 473 U.S. counties analyzed in the report (71 percent).

Affordability in the research was determined by assuming a 3 percent down payment and calculating the amount of income needed to make monthly house payments — including mortgage, property taxes and insurance — on a median-priced home.

Some of the counties where average wage earners couldn't afford a median-priced house included Los Angeles County, California; Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona; San Diego County, California; Orange County, California; and Miami.

Elsewhere, an average wage earner would need more than their income to buy a median-priced home, including in Kings County (Brooklyn), New York (115.9 percent); New York County (Manhattan), New York (115.0 percent); Santa Cruz County, California (114.1 percent); Marin County, California in the San Francisco metro area (103.1 percent); and Maui County, Hawaii (100.7 percent).

One creative response by six friends in pricey Toronto, Canada?

Pool resources and buy a home together. They share space, expenses, meal prep, and yes, bathrooms.

See this video <http://bit.ly/2HK3gmf> about the planning involved, how the purchase was structured, and how the arrangement works for them.

It's a smart solution that also could work for baby boomers and seniors looking to cut expenses, downsize, and have daily companionship.

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