

[DESIGN]

DESIGNING WITH CULTURAL AWARENESS

Builders are introducing new floor plans that respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population

By Susan Bady, Senior Editor

Racial and ethnic diversity will continue to grow and define the U.S. population into the future. According to the Pew Research Center, by 2055 the nation will not have a single racial or ethnic majority, and most of the population growth is expected to be linked to new Asian or Hispanic immigration.

This isn't a pattern that home builders and designers can afford to ignore. Right now, the influx of multicultural buyers is most noticeable in major urban centers such as Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. Pew indicates that Asia has replaced Latin America, including Mexico, as the biggest source of new immigrants, a fact borne out by the sources consulted for this article. (The term "Asian" is used here to denote people of Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, and similar origins, while "East Indian" encompasses Pakistani and other South Asian nationalities.)

New homes must offer flexible floor plans that allow buyers to assign specific purposes to their living space. Options for such features as prep kitchens and full multigenerational suites are essential. In some locations, buyers may prefer



elevations that are more traditional than contemporary. It may also mean that most or all of a builder's floor plans are designed according to feng shui, the Chinese art and practice of creating harmonious surroundings, or vastu shastra, a traditional Hindu system of architecture.

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