



Meeting buyer demands in a seller's market: Top trends for 2014

Posted: February 19, 2014 | Word Count: 650

(BPT) - With many real estate industry watchers predicting 2014 will be a seller's market, you may think you won't need to do much to sell your home this spring. Not so fast - while more buyers are likely to be competing for homes, that doesn't mean they're willing to settle for less than perfect. In fact, coming out of the real estate crash of a few years ago, buyers have learned the importance of getting the maximum value for their home investment.

While home prices are expected to rise in 2014, buyers continue to have high expectations. Homes that meet buyers' lists of "must-haves" and "would-love-to-have" features will be positioned to sell more quickly and closer to - or above - list price, experts say. So what are homebuyers looking for in 2014?

Whole-home, beautiful energy efficient features

In the earliest days of the efficiency trend, many buyers would have settled for a house that reduced heating and cooling costs through good insulation, or cut electricity bills with energy-sipping appliances. Modern buyers, however, are interested in homes that take a holistic approach to energy efficiency. That means supplementing energy savings with more thoughtful features like daylighting and natural ventilation through [energy-efficient skylights \(http://www.veluxusa.com/\)](http://www.veluxusa.com/), using solar-powered water heaters, and employing [intelligent controls \(http://skylights.veluxusa.com/consumer/products/residential_skylights/accessories/electric_controls\)](http://skylights.veluxusa.com/consumer/products/residential_skylights/accessories/electric_controls) for skylights, other lighting and heating/cooling systems.

Buyers want energy-efficient upgrades that also offer high aesthetic appeal in addition to functionality, making features like ENERGY STAR-qualified skylights particularly popular. In fact, 55 percent of homebuyers in a National Association of Home Builder's survey said skylights are desirable or essential. Skylight manufacturer VELUX America notes that installing no-leak, solar-powered fresh air (venting) skylights not only enhances indoor air quality, but can boost energy efficiency, working in concert with windows. Add [remote-controlled, solar-powered blinds \(http://www.veluxusa.com/consumer/products/blinds\)](http://www.veluxusa.com/consumer/products/blinds) and skylight energy performance ratings can improve as much as 45 percent. And solar powered skylights and blinds, as well as the installation

costs, are eligible for a 30 percent Federal tax credit (<http://www.veluxusa.com/taxcredits>).

Smarter size and space

While buyers will always look to get the most bang for their buck, many are deciding that “bang” does not necessarily mean “bigger.” The great recession saw many families downsize into smaller homes – with more manageable mortgages. Even with the economy moving again, many homeowners have found they like the efficiency and utility of smaller, more purposeful spaces.

The functionality of a room is now as important as its size. Buyers will continue to embrace rooms that make the most of the space available, such as compact kitchens that maximize storage, smaller bathrooms that optimize lighting efficiency and privacy, while saving wall space through use of skylights, and open rooms that serve multiple purposes. To see how skylights would look in any room in your home, get a skylight planner app (http://www.veluxusa.com/morevelux/news/news_media/iphone_apps), take pictures in your home, and overlay skylights and blinds on the images with a few clicks.

Aging-in-place potential

As more baby boomers approach and enter their golden years, homebuyers are looking toward the future and seeking homes that offer the potential of allowing them to age in place. In demand are home features that not only look good now (such as an open floor plan or larger bathroom) but that can be easily adapted for older occupants who may face challenges with mobility, vision and other age-related issues.

A range of home features fit the bill, including ground-floor bedrooms, ample natural lighting to enhance vision, open floor plans that minimize obstacles to mobility, larger bathrooms that can easily be fitted with grab bars, kitchens with age-friendly features such as touch faucets, and smaller yards with lower maintenance requirements.

While higher demand and less inventory are likely to make 2014 a better year for sellers than buyers, if you’re selling your home, knowing what buyers are looking for can help ensure a faster, more rewarding sale – in any market.