

Newsday

LIhome

The Escobar-Betancur family at their new home in West Babylon.

In&Out

ROOM TO ENTERTAIN, QUARTZ COUNTERS, A POOL:
WHAT LI HOMEOWNERS WANT NOW **C6**



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On the hunt, with

7 hot trends in
kitchens, baths
and home design

BY ARLENE GROSS
Special to Newsday

Sebastian Escobar wanted a bigger house for his growing family. Escobar, 29, an NYPD officer, and his wife, Jessica Betancur, 29, a surgical coordinator, who just had their third child, moved into a six-bedroom high ranch in West Babylon in April.

The house's open floor plan was well-suited to the family's need to entertain. "We have a big family: my in-laws, my parents, my brothers," Escobar says. "We like to host gatherings."

The Escobar-Betancurs are on trend when it comes to home design these days, where bigger is high on homebuyers' wish lists, says Mitch Pally, chief executive officer of Long Island Builders Institute, an Islandia-based trade association representing the home building industry.

Larger houses are going up to incorporate a variety of uses, including home offices, gyms and movie theaters. "Anything that they can do in their home safely within their own confines that they don't want to do outside, they're putting in their house," Pally says.

And that's creating a boom in the home renovation business.

Nationally, home improvement and repair expenditures are expected to reach \$427 billion in the third quarter of 2022, a 20% increase over last year, according to the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

A bump-out extension with a redone kitchen will cost approximately \$125,000, says Mike Cascio Jr., of Cascio Construction of Oceanside. A whole house renovation, from drywall to electric, will run about \$350,000, says Cascio, adding that since the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain hiccups, prices have surged from 30% to 40%.



DEBBIE EGAN-CHIN

For kitchens, subtle accents, wood tones and natural materials are in, says interior designer Liz Kohart, at a Garden City home she redid.

"People are transforming bedrooms into offices; they're transforming areas of finished basements. They're transforming the house into uses the house was not built for originally," Pally says.

What's in and what's out? Here are seven trends that Long Island house hunters, homeowners and builders say are top of mind today.

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Most buyers want move-in ready homes, notes Nicole Perry, a real estate agent with Our Community Realty in Elmont, who worked with the Escobar-Betancurs to find their home, which they bought for \$615,000.

"A lot of buyers are into the open concept," says Perry. "They don't like a living room on one side and the closed-in kitchen behind it. While cooking, they can see into the living room if they're entertaining or if they have little ones."

GOODBYE GRANITE

While white kitchens are still popular, many homeowners are adding subtle accents in a natural oak wood tone for islands and range hoods, says interior designer Liz Kohart of Liz Kohart Interiors of Garden City.

For countertops, granite is out and quartz, which is human-made and durable, is trending, Kohart says. Prices for the two are comparable, with popular colors costing more than other hues, notes Cascio, who recently renovated the Garden City kitchen Kohart designed.

"They look like marble, but they are nonporous, so they are cleanable and don't scratch as easily," says Kohart, noting that granite that looks like marble — white with gray veining — is the most-used variety.

For kitchen floors, wood is your best bet and should match the rest of the first floor, says Kohart, who recommends a

combination of high hats, island pendants and dining-table fixtures for kitchen lighting.

A wood floor costs \$10 per square foot installed, says Cascio, adding that a tile floor costs more because it's much more labor intensive.

High hats can come to about \$1,500 or more, depending on the number; pendants and table lighting, between \$1,500 and \$2,000, says Kohart.

Trending now are slab backsplashes in the same material as countertops, which create a uniform look in the room, and brass hardware and light fixtures.

Soffits, Kohart says, are out. Cabinets should go up to the ceiling. Cabinetry costs between \$15,000 and \$25,000 for an average-size kitchen, plus additional charges for installation, notes Cascio.

Average costs for brass hardware in the mid-price range would be about \$1,000, says Kohart.

LOSE THE SPA TUB

Spa tubs and bidets are out; polished nickel and brass hardware are in, says Kohart.

"Free-standing soaking tubs are what people are doing instead of the Jacuzzi platform tubs," she says, adding that a free-standing tub costs about \$1,500, compared with \$2,000 for a spa tub, which takes up more space and requires more maintenance.

Also on trend: creating the largest shower the bathroom can accommodate, often with double rainforest heads. In some cases, for primary bathrooms, people are removing bathtubs in favor of a very large shower.

Large white or beige porcelain tiles that look like marble are gaining steam in the bathroom, as are light shades of quartz or marble for vanities: quartz for durability and marble for a timeless look.

High hats and wall sconces on either side of the mirror are trending in lighting bathrooms

wish lists in hand



LINDA ROSIER

Space was a high priority for the Escobar-Betancur family during their home search.



HOWARD SCHNAPP

Architect T.J. Costello chose pocket doors for privacy at his home in Manhasset.

and powder rooms. For bathroom walls, durable vinyl grass cloth wallpaper is popular, and for powder rooms, paper patterned wallpaper is in.

Bowl-like vessel sinks — sinks that sit above the countertop — are out and are comparably priced to rectangular vessel sinks, which are still popular, as are standard undermount sinks, which are the least expensive.

PRIVACY PLEASE

Because so many people are spending more time at home these days, they want more privacy and separate spaces, says T.J. Costello, principal of Hierarchy Architecture of Manhasset.

Barn doors and pocket doors are two effective ways to achieve privacy and flexibility with your space, he says, “because you don’t have to get into restructuring the walls. You can just close off some openings with tracks and barn doors.”

Another popular option is sliding glass panels with black iron mullions or grilles that divide the panes.

“It makes a thin glass wall separator between rooms and has a slightly industrial or sleek, modern vibe,” Costello says.

THIN AS A BRICK

Another hot trend is using a thin veneer of bricks cut to about a half-inch thick instead of

the typical 2¼-inch thickness.

“We typically use them for a wood-framed chimney for a fireplace,” says Greg D’Angelo, of Greg D’Angelo Construction of Wainscott. “It looks exactly like a masonry full-brick chimney, but it’s framed out of wood.”

Thin bricks, which can be used for foundational walls, are about 15% to 25% less expensive than regular ones and are also easier to install, says D’Angelo.

People are now using these thin bricks on den walls or as fireplace surrounds. Outside, the bricks can be installed as a facade to hide stucco or plaster covering the concrete where

the grade of the property exposes the foundation.

THE ALLURE OF THE POOL

The demand for swimming pools — from basic above-ground to high-end luxury and everything in between — started soaring soon after the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown in 2020, says Greg Darvin, owner of Pristine Pools in East Hampton.

“The swimming pool in their backyards, on the whole, really became the sanctuary that [families] needed,” Darvin says.

As it has been for years, the classic rectangular pool is by

far the preferred shape, but now homeowners are looking for greater efficiency in their pools and alternatives to chlorine treatment.

“Most of my clients want to be passively eco-friendly,” says Darvin.

Though they still want to heat their pools, people are eager to add features such as variable speed and electric heat pumps, “that’s going to have the smallest carbon footprint, or burn the least fossil fuels or be the most efficient and effective,” says Darvin.

Infinity pools, where the water flows over one edge like

a waterfall, are a pricey option, and limited to locations set on a hill.

For the surface surrounding the pool, people are looking for low-maintenance, cooling materials such as limestone, an alternative to bluestone, which tends to get hot, Darvin says.

A well-built gunite pool would start in the \$85,000 range, says Darvin, adding that there’s really no one-size-fits-all pricing for details and finishes.

ENTERTAINING AL FRESCO

With COVID seemingly with us for the foreseeable future, outdoors is the preferred venue for home entertaining, creating strong demand for outdoor barbecues and kitchens.

They can go from a basic free-standing grill to an elaborate setup with a built-in gas grill, secondary charcoal grill, refrigerator, wine cooler, warming drawer, pizza oven and cabinetry.

“They literally become outdoor kitchens,” says Darvin. Prefabricated portable smokeless firepits offer a flexible, less expensive alternative to built-ins: They give you more flexibility and are less expensive.

A good smokeless fire pit could be in the \$500 to \$700 range, depending on size and accessories, and a built-in wood burning fire pit would start at \$1,500 and go up from there depending on size, finishes and details, adds Darvin.



DEBBIE EGAN-CHIN

Buyers today want wood floors in the kitchen, along with a combination of high hats and pendants for lighting, Liz Kohart says.

Keep in mind

Homeowners looking to build a larger house should make sure it fits in contextually with its surrounding lot and neighborhood, advises architect T.J. Costello.

He warns against following trends such as the modern farmhouse look popping up across Long Island — which often features black windows and board-and-batten siding — that might go out of fashion as the next home style trend comes into focus.

“Style is often synonymous with things that come and go,” Costello says. “It’s really not a wise investment to be so style-conscious.” — ARLENE GROSS