



Plan B-91010, [www.homeplans.com](http://www.homeplans.com)

# Reign of the Special-Function Room

## Best Home-Design Trends

by Jennifer Shepard

The American Institute of Architects recently conducted a survey to find out which features clients are asking architects for. We were intrigued by the survey results largely because they match the amenities included in our stock home plans. On the following pages, we highlight the most-requested special-function rooms.

### Home Office

Topping the list of home-design trends is the home office. Rising gas prices and the increased ease of telecommuting have made home offices a necessity. But whether you are a full-time telecommuter or run your own business, a dedicated office gives you a quiet, professional haven in your home.

Your home office should give you the comfort and privacy to succeed at your tasks, whether it's making cold calls or writing a report. Think about where the room is situated in the home. If clients visit you, positioning your office in the front of your home will allow you to maintain privacy for conducting business, and will decrease the risk of your guest tripping over an abandoned toy or spying household clutter.

Taking the hobby room to a new level, this activity area features large, bright windows and doors that will illuminate any task. Well-placed storage protects tools and supplies, while keeping them close at hand ready to use.



Plan LDH-1999-W, [www.homeplans.com](http://www.homeplans.com)

Filing paperwork and writing reports has never been more pleasant. This winning home office boasts built-ins that hide work detritus and a fireplace that offers a soothing, homey touch.



Plan L-9805-UDA, [www.homeplans.com](http://www.homeplans.com)

Certain to be the hub of the house, this game room dazzles with many options for fun and relaxation. Table tennis, followed by refreshments, may be in order.



Plan LDH-1999-W, [www.homeplans.com](http://www.homeplans.com)

This home's entry welcomes friends and family with a built-in bench and storage, a civilized (and attractive) environment for removing shoes and outer wear.



Plan GS-2403, [www.homeplans.com](http://www.homeplans.com)

The high-tech TV is the focal point of this bonus room turned media center. Cozy sofas and comfortable throw pillows help you get settled on movie night. *Photo by Benum Enterprises, Inc.*

Custom bookcases and cabinets are an attractive way to display objects or reference books (the “tools of your trade”), as well as conceal unsightly computer equipment and cables. Control your paperwork, such as contracts, reports and brochures or catalogs, with built-in filing cabinets. Well-placed windows can provide natural lighting that elevates your mood and makes the site of sometimes-difficult tasks easier to swallow, while promoting creativity and increasing productivity.

### Hobby Room

Crafting is hot! Creative activities such as knitting, sewing, scrapbooking, beading, quilting—even rug hooking—are making a comeback. Timeless pursuits, like stamp collecting or electric trains, are popular ways to socialize with friends or family or relieve stress. No matter which hobby you've taken up, one thing is true: They all come with a ton of equipment. A hobby room gives you space to spread out your supplies and work in comfort. To that end, make sure you have counters or workbenches built to give you a large work surface. You'll also appreciate cabinets for storing bolts of fabric and drawers for keeping delicate, decorative papers. Install high-quality lighting for fine-detail work and a sink for clean-up. Now you're all set to relax and enjoy your creativity.

### Game Room

If your childhood “rec” room was anything like mine, it was an afterthought, located in a dark, dank basement with plywood paneling on the walls and carpet remnants on the floor. By comparison, more careful consideration is being given to today's game room. As more people are frequently entertaining in their homes, they're looking for a comfortable, flexible space where they can unwind and have fun with their family and friends. Whether your children play board games here or dad hosts his weekly poker night, you can get extra mileage out of the room by installing a wet bar or refrigerator for storing refreshments, comfortable seating and perhaps a bath.

### Mud Room

Get outerwear out of the living room and stop mud in its tracks with a mud room. These rooms may be situated almost anywhere—near the back door, in a corner of the garage or as part of a breezeway. Mud rooms are ideal areas for dumping and storing the modern family's detritus whether it's muddy gardening tools or sweaty sports gear. Even dog bowls and leashes can find an out-of-the-way home in a mud room. Shelving, cabinets and cubbies are all effective ways to organize this space, providing a place to hang coats, store winter gear (like hats and mittens) and park boots and shoes. Installing the washer and dryer in the mud room is a convenient and immediate way to clean up those dirty clothes.

### Media Room

With endless options and lower prices, high-tech audio and video equipment has never been more accessible to consumers. As a result, customers are requesting special spaces in their homes where they can showcase their electronic toys. Flat-screen TVs are increasingly more commonplace, often becoming the focal point of the media center. But, the media room isn't just a place for watching TV or movies—you can also install your stereo and high-quality speakers and listen to music, or you may choose to use the computer here. Also consider adding drawers to your media center where you can conceal accessories like remote controls, DVDs or CDs. As a popular place to entertain friends and family, media rooms are quickly becoming the rec room of the 21st century.



A clean, well-lit space: this window-lined laundry room is a pleasant, spacious place for washing, folding or ironing clothes.



A place for everything, and everything in its place: this walk-in closet boasts storage options to help even the most untidy person stay on top of organization.

## Choose Durable, Low-Maintenance Materials

**“Flexible” and “easy-to-use” were common themes in the American Institute of Architects home-trends survey results. Low-maintenance materials include the following:**

- Siding. Brick, vinyl and new fiber cement siding—all have longer staying power than wood.
- Decking. Environmentally friendly, composite deck materials don't warp, splinter or rot.
- Countertops. Compressed composites that mimic popular and expensive natural stone are durable, heat resistant and affordable.
- Flooring. Laminates (including hardwood), concrete and bamboo are popular, attractive and easy-to-maintain flooring alternatives.



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## Laundry Room

Now that your basement has been given over to entertainment, the washer and dryer have found a place to reside in the laundry room. Featuring new high-end appliances in a wide range of colors, laundry rooms may be conveniently located off the kitchen where you might find yourself doing other chores. Or, if it better suits your lifestyle, the laundry room can be situated on your home's second floor near the bedrooms and bathrooms where most laundry is generated. Today's laundry room features wall-mounted shelves and cabinets for storing detergent and bleach. Built-in ironing boards are also popular, saving space by folding into a cabinet when not in use. This is another room where adequate lighting makes your task more pleasant—spotting stains or ironing collars has never been easier. You can even turn the laundry room into a multipurpose room for gift wrapping, sewing or bill writing. And don't forget to install a utility sink for cleaning up.

## Au pair/In-law Suites

The extended family is becoming not so extended. Maybe you have live-in help for small children or a boomerang child in transition between college and the real world. Maybe you plan to have aging parents or in-laws in your home as an alternative to assisted living. A guest suite can be located in a separate wing of the home or in a bonus room over the garage. Offer a spacious, comfortable bedroom, a private bath and even a sitting area where guests can unwind and enjoy their privacy.

## Storage

A premium always seems to be placed on good storage. If you visit a store like The Home Depot®, you can see that we are a nation obsessed with storage. And now entire specialty stores are devoted to containers, bins, shelves and cabinets meant to stow our stuff and hide our clutter. Lucky for you, our home plans offer high-quality, logical storage systems for every room.

Look for decent-sized closets in secondary bedrooms, as well as walk-in closets in the master suite. Both can be equipped with any and all manner of clothes racks, shelves, shoe caddies or drawers to maximize organization. Kitchen pantries may range in size and shape, but consider arranging shelving to accommodate packaged food, cookbooks, pots and pans and other cooking gear. You can also have racks installed for holding wine bottles or spice jars.

Even the garage can stand to be supremely organized. After all, fitting the car neatly into its stall is easier when you aren't trying to also avoid driving over the garden hose. You will find many garages with separate storage space, but large garages can host shelving and caddies that conveniently store and protect extension cords, garden tools and even golf clubs and baseball bats.

We live in a busy society, and low-maintenance, high-functioning homes are of paramount importance to modern individuals and families. As convenience and informality make a comeback, let a special function room lend comfort and style to your new home. 🏠

Source: American Institute of Architects, 2005.  
[http://www.aia.org/econ\\_designsurvey\\_results](http://www.aia.org/econ_designsurvey_results)

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