



FLORIDA

DOCTOR

●●●● CENTRAL FLORIDA EDITION

APRIL 2012

A business and lifestyle magazine for
doctors, about doctors

LOCATION, VALUE & QUALITY

By Victor Farina

Still What Make a Doctor's House a Home

When choosing their home, physicians as a group tend to be neither trend followers nor trendsetters. Yet there are significant factors that, time and again, help them decide where they live, whether they stay there and what they value most both in a house and in a neighborhood or community.

A doctor living in Windermere, for example, remodeled his home when he and his wife were just starting their family and he wished to reside close to his practice. After they had children they renovated the house again, but later, when the wife was

driving the kids to and from school each day, their builder found them a lot in Orlando. There they built a new and very customized home which was much closer to the school and the center of their family life.

Stories like this one show that, year after year, location remains a driving force when doctors decide to buy, build or renovate a house--whether their chosen location is conveniently near their work in an office or hospital, or near the school their children attend, or both.

Another consistent factor shown among doctors is the desire to live in older, established neighborhoods, regardless of other trends in home buying and building. If his or her children have grown up and moved out, or a physician has changed office locations, he or she will tend to buy a home in an established area and renovate it. There also are a number of newly constructed homes resulting from tear-downs of older dwellings on prime, established lots.

Moreover, current statistics show that in Central Florida, renovation projects still are in demand even as construction of new luxury homes is increasing. For example, the Seminole County Building Department issued 51 permits for home remodeling projects

and 57 permits for new construction of residences between January 1 and February 29 of this year. The City of Orlando's permit office, meanwhile, issued approximately 132 permits for home renovations but only 64 permits for new construction of residences during the month of February alone.

Trends in medical office space are similar. Most doctors are buying existing spaces, renovating them and making them smaller to fit their needs. They are not, in general, expanding the square footage when they plan their move-ins. Lake Mary, downtown Orlando, southwest Orlando and Lake Nona continue to be the most popular locations for buying medical offices.

The most dramatic and probably culturally significant trend concerns what doctors now value and want most in a home. Gone are the days when many professionals felt bigger was better and spaciousness dominated 7,000 to 10,000-square-foot McMansions. Today doctors still want open floor plans but they seek smaller lots, and the majority of new custom homes are averaging between 3,000 and 5,000 square feet in size.

Physician homeowners also want to make the best use of this space, and are requesting very refined architectural details and luxury finishes, as well as energy-efficient, low-maintenance homes with high quality windows and insulation, plaster rather than drywall, luxurious multi-use outdoor areas, and home office spaces with the latest technology.

There is an emphasis on the selection of trim, crown molding, cabinetry, wood or stone flooring and environ-



Doctors often choose older, established neighborhoods; doctors like open floor plans.

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Doctors seek spacious custom homes; homes outfitted with the latest technology; multiple baths; custom kitchens with accents and upgrades; custom finishes and fine details; fun and functional outdoor spaces.



mentally green materials. Many are mixing materials, such as brick window sills on a stucco exterior with a slate driveway to provide luxury touches to the outside of a house. Other examples are kitchen renovations that take the room up a notch or two by incorporating high end finishes rather than doubling the space, and patios that have stone fireplaces or fire pits, along with TVs and outdoor kitchens, to lend coziness and a “family room” feel to the outside.

There is a focus on value, tastefulness, efficiency and quality that, at the same time, is concerned with a home’s scale, often with scaling

downward. People, including doctors, say they don’t want to have rooms they don’t use, and most are not building large mansions even if they can afford to.

Many doctors are not first-time homebuyers. Most are established and they have their own personal tastes and needs. Doctors are also very busy people who want to enjoy their personal lives and downtime as much as possible.

Therefore, whether you are upgrading, or buying or building for the first or fifth time, location, established values and luxury touches are still what make a house your personal home. **FD**



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About the Author: Victor Farina is president of Farina & Sons Inc. in Orlando, and he is president of the invitation-only Master Custom Builder Council, which honored him as its 2011 “Builder of the Year”. He has won numerous Aurora Awards from the Southeast Building Conference and Remodelers Showcase Awards in Parade of Homes competitions. In addition, Farina & Sons was named one of the nation’s Big 50 remodeling firms by Remodeling Magazine.