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It's in the Wash

When It Comes to Dream Homes

We spend seven to nine hours on this chore a week, so it's no surprise a room devoted to it has become one of the make-or-break conveniences sought out by prospective home buyers.

Laundry. It's piling up in importance for homeowners, as the washer and dryer come into their own. According to a recent survey by the National Association of Home Builders, 95 percent of participants said they either desire or must have a separate laundry room in their new home. And it doesn't end with the machines. Homeowners also want an expanded space that can accommodate multipurpose tasks—such as sewing, ironing and a table for folding clothes.

Location. The laundry room is also moving up in the world in terms of its location within the home. No longer banished to the basement or mud room, "today's laundry room has moved upstairs into the living quarters, and it is spacious, practically rivaling the kitchen in finishes and gadgets," says 2004 Remodelors Council Chairman Douglas L. Sutton Sr. of Sutton Siding and Remodeling, Springfield, Ill. "People want comfortable workspaces no matter what activity they are doing, and they don't want to lug laundry up and down stairs."

Laundry Trends. The newest trend in laundry room remodeling reflects homeowners' demand for convenience while doing this chore. Laundry rooms are moving into spaces adjacent to kitchens, bedrooms or bathrooms, according to Remodelors Council members. And no expense is spared, say these members, reporting that some homeowners are asking for their laundry room to be outfitted with crown moulding and hardwood or tiled floor to match adjacent rooms and the rest of the house.

And, say Remodelers Council members, homeowners' laundry room wish lists are only growing:

- cabinets to store laundry detergent and other products, often in wood finishes normally used in the kitchen;
- bigger, high-end appliances—washers and dryers that can handle growing wash loads and even two dryers to keep up with the washer; and
- built-in cabinets or closets to hide the appliances when not in use, giving the laundry room a more sophisticated look.

Home at First Glance

When looking to purchase a home, here's a handy checklist of things to evaluate at first glance. They'll help you understand the scope of work needed and will inform you and your REALTOR® as you evaluate the price you are willing to pay.

- Inspect the conditions of walls, ceilings and floors, including carpeting, doors, windows and other structural units. When inspecting these areas of your prospective new home, check to see if the paint or carpets are in good shape.
- Next, check out whether the plumbing and electricity work effectively in all the rooms, including bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Look at the front yard, back yard and porches to make sure they are in reasonably good shape.
- Finally, check the little things, like faucets and all doors, hinges and doorknobs.

…That done, you're ready to evaluate the big picture.