



An Interview With Bernie Kern, Owner of BBKern DESIGNS of Colorado

Helping Potential Clients Understand Current Building Trends and The Types of Projects That BBKern DESIGNS Can Help You Create.



What new trends do you see in the home building industry?

Downsizing

Here in Colorado, I am seeing a lot of clients who are downsizing. For example, on one house that we designed and finished over the summer, the clients are coming from a home that was 10,000 square foot, and downsized to a 4,500 square foot home that is a smaller and more practical craftsmen-style home. I'm seeing this downsizing quite often in the industry here in Colorado it's a common request from people to get out of their bigger homes and go into something smaller.

Interior finishes

Master Bath Showers

A trend that I'm seeing, which has been very popular here over the past couple of years, is shower enclosures. I see many clients not wanting to go with the basic tub in the master bath area. What they're requesting instead are larger showers. These showers are designed where the floors are flush, which means that the tile on the

bathroom floor goes right directly into the shower without there being a curve, step up, or any kind of a threshold. The floor is sloped inside of the shower area to keep the water out. We are also conscious about where we put the shower heads, pointing them away from the shower door area. And in many cases, when speaking of a door, many people want the walk-in shower without a door. So, we design the floor inside the shower area to slope down to a drain and keep the shower heads pointing away from the door opening. This trend of having a flush shower, while eliminating the tub areas in the master bath areas, is a current popular trend.



Eating Area

We're not seeing as many formal dining rooms in our design work, but instead we see designs around a more family-orientated kitchen with a nook. These nook spaces are now much larger, and are more of the size of a dining room, and we're eliminating the formal dining rooms altogether. So, they don't have two eating areas, but have more of an oversized kitchen or great room with an oversized nook and eating area. That trend is something that I see going into design this year, next year, and even into 2018.

Tell us about some of the projects that you're currently working on

I have quite a variety of projects right now. As we're finishing up projects for the summer of 2016, I have the widest variety of projects on the table that I have seen in years. That variety includes tiny house designs, remodels and additions, custom designs, and so on. I even have a client who wants to implement warehouse storage bins to create a nice little architectural home. So that's quite a variety.

Tiny Home Design

Let me talk first about the tiny home design. I received a request for a project where we are creating a tiny house laboratory. It's a prototype tiny home laboratory for scientists to set up in different places throughout the world to run their



experiments. They want their tiny house to be energy efficient. So we're going through the design phase to implement a high-performance home, which is a very interesting and rewarding process.

Remodeling—Front & Back

I currently have a number of remodeling projects. Some are expansions to kitchens and great rooms on the back of the house. Along that line, another remodel idea that is requested quite often, but which is a secondary thought regarding the front of a family's home, is that people will come to me and say, "I want to add to the back of the house, increase the size of the kitchen, and add a nice little deck back there." And then, as we move forward on that project, they often say, "You know, I really don't like the way the front of my house looks."

What we've been doing is recreating the front porch, doing more of a cozy country-style covered



porch area so that people can sit out and enjoy the front of their house, as well as the back of the house. It's kind of like an afterthought because it usually comes up after we begin the design for the back of the house addition, and it is not really part of the original plan. In other words, as we progress on the design for the back of the house, people ask, "Can you do anything with the front?" Our approach is to get out sketch paper and sketch up a design, and our clients usually fall in love with it. They really like that covered front porch architectural feature to their home. That's been really popular with additions and remodels.



Going forward, I see more remodeling projects coming to us. I would say that my workload right now is probably 60% custom homes and 40% remodels. I have a feeling that remodeling work will increase. I've seen the trend before. And what happens when remodeling work picks up is that light commercial jobs pick up also. In fact, I've recently picked up some light commercial projects, office finishes, small-office buildings, and so on. One project that I'm working on right now is actually a small convenient store that is around 1,250 square feet.





Custom Homes

On custom homes, I have had quite a variety of projects. They range from a typical Colorado smaller ranch style that is around 2,000 square foot, to the \$1 million to \$2 million homes in the higher parts of Colorado, particularly in the mountains in the more expensive property areas.

What areas of the USA do you do design work for?

I have done projects in California, Texas, and Florida, but the majority of my work is in the Colorado area. I am very familiar with the building departments in the major part of the cities here, Colorado Springs and Denver. When I work on a project out of state, I usually contact one of my AIBD fellow peers and work directly with them because I prefer to have someone that's close to the client to be able to work with their building department in that particular state.

