

Bigger Isn't Always Better: Move-Up Homebuyers Prioritize Style and Functionality Alongside Square Footage, According to New PulteGroup Survey

New findings suggest today's move-up buyers are redefining what it means to upgrade, balancing functionality, lifestyle fit and thoughtful design and the right amount of space for their needs.

For today's move-up homebuyers, the dream of a new home doesn't necessarily mean more space. It means better space.

According to a new national survey conducted by [PulteGroup](#) among 1,325 U.S. homeowners who recently purchased their next home, a majority (51%) bought a home the same size or smaller than their previous one. Yet regardless of whether they purchased a larger, similarly sized or smaller home, 78% said their new home met or exceeded expectations. The findings suggest today's move-up buyers are increasingly prioritizing functionality, design and lifestyle alongside square footage when evaluating their next home.



Life-stage changes are also influencing purchasing decisions. Respondents cited a major life change, such as a growing family or aging parents (25%), as the top reason

for purchasing a new home, followed by feeling that the timing was right to move (24%) and needing more space (22%).

While younger buyers were more likely to purchase larger homes, older buyers increasingly opted for homes that better matched their lifestyle needs, underscoring how life stage is shaping today's definition of a move-up home.

Once the decision was made, many buyers moved quickly, with more than half (56%) saying they considered moving for less than a year before purchasing their next home.

More than half (51%) said the kitchen became the most valuable space after moving, ranking ahead of the living or family room (38%), garage (26%) and flex space (24%). When shopping for their next home, 37% of buyers said a modern or upgraded kitchen was a must-have feature, second only to location (55%).

The finding aligns with trends identified in PulteGroup's most recent [Design Trends Forecast](#), which found homeowners increasingly gravitating toward oversized kitchen islands, integrated dining areas and open gathering spaces that bring people together. Flexible rooms, outdoor living spaces and layouts that support evolving family needs also continue gaining traction among today's buyers.



"For years, moving up was often associated primarily with buying more square footage, said Angela Nuessle, national vice president of interior design at PulteGroup. What we're seeing today is that buyers are becoming more intentional about how they evaluate value in a home. They're placing greater value on homes that support the way they live, whether that's putting more emphasis on a well-designed kitchen, an increased desire for flexible spaces that meet the needs of evolving families or outdoor areas that extend everyday living."

These priorities appear to be paying off. Nearly half (47%) of respondents said their overall comfort and enjoyment of life improved after moving, while 26% said their ability to host and entertain improved. At a time when many homeowners are being thoughtful and carefully evaluating their next move, the findings of this latest survey suggest buyers are looking for the right combination of space, design and functionality to support their lifestyles and evolving needs.

PulteGroup conducted the online survey in May 2026 among 1,325 U.S. homeowners who recently purchased their next home.

About PulteGroup

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PulteGroup, Inc. (NYSE: PHM), based in Atlanta, Georgia, is one of America's largest homebuilding companies with operations in more than 45 markets throughout the country. Through its brand portfolio that includes Pulte Homes, Centex, Del Webb, DiVosta Homes, and John Wieland Homes and Neighborhoods, the company is one of the industry's most versatile homebuilders able to meet the needs of multiple buyer groups and respond to changing consumer demand. PulteGroup's purpose is building incredible places where people can live their dreams.

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