

Invest in Your Nest

the master suite

YOUR SANCTUARY

Ahhh, your bedroom. The tranquility. The serenity. Your bedroom is not just where you sleep; it's often where you go to escape. So why not have a luxurious, spacious, ultra-comfortable master suite to run to? A suite is much more attractive to potential homebuyers than a master bedroom with one standard closet and a standard bathroom. "Especially for clients with kids," says architect Mark LePage, "a master bedroom suite becomes a refuge."

However you use the space, some features "wow" more than others. "The most desirable features in a master bedroom," says Karen Kline, owner of Spice Hill Interiors

Kline answers. Verboten: old Jacuzzi-style tubs with their metal jets. "They've become outdated," warns Kline, noting that the newer spa tubs are perforated (no nasty jets to jab you), so that they disperse air evenly throughout the tub. Spa tubs are available with integrated pillows; hydro-thermal massage that combines water, air, and heat; and a number of "therapies": chromatherapy, which allows you to control the color of your bath water; aromatherapy, so that you can add scented essential oils into the water for maximum relaxation; thermotherapy, which controls the temperature of the water in the tub once it's filled; and sound-therapy, that is, wall-mounted MP3 players that come with wireless, waterproof headphones.

"The master bathroom is really a place to go to relax, not just wash up," LePage says.

Remodeling Magazine's 2007 Cost vs. Value Report pegs a typical upscale master suite addition at about \$220,000. But given that the median size of listed Westchester County homes is 34 percent larger than the national median (2,400 vs. 1,795 square feet), it will cost you a bit more. LePage says the additions he sees tend to run about 1,000 square feet, and he suggests \$250 per square foot as a ballpark figure for additions and renovations. WPMLS's Boyland estimates that, in Westchester County, a well-done major kitchen and bath renovation will recoup up to 85 percent in resale value.



in Ossining, "are a state-of-the-art TV and sound system, ambient lighting on dimmers, a dressing area, makeup area, or separate dressing room adjunct to or included in the closet area or bathroom."

In the master suite, there are two surefire components guaranteed to knock socks off: a killer closet, dressing room, or combination of both and a spa-like master bathroom.

What does a master bathroom need to be considered "spa-like?" "Radiant heat and heated towel bars, two sinks, large medicine/storage cabinets, a steam shower, and a spa tub,"





Closet Designers' Bedroom Essentials

AND WHAT THEY WILL COST YOU

"Some must-have items are see-through glass doors with interior lighting [\$150 to \$300], a pullout pants rack [\$190], a built-in melamine hamper with a chrome basket [\$300], and a pullout tie drawer [\$200]."

—Liz Sleeman, Sales Manager, California Closets, Hawthorne

"The most important thing is, maximize your hanging and shelving space. A nice item to have is a double velvet-lined jewelry tray [\$150]."

—Stefanie Stein, President, Alternative Closets, Mount Kisco

"A five-foot mahogany dressing table [\$1,000] and a freestanding mahogany bench, which can be converted into a hamper [\$500], are great additions."

—Joe Schneider, Owner, Closets Plus, Pleasantville

"A shoe-storage system is essential. A cherry-wood shoe rack with a fifty-shoe capacity [\$600 to \$900] is a great item. Other items that would be terrific for a closet include a built-in wall safe with a digital face [\$600 - \$1,000], a valet rod [\$50], a full-length mirror with a hard wood frame [\$300], and a forty-two-inch ironing board with a swivel option and raised-panel front [\$650]."

—Sharon Gallerani, Co-owner and Vice President, Closet Factory, Bridgeport, CT

COLOR: PLAY IT SAFE

Yes, creams and whites are still the colors of choice for bathrooms. Ditto natural materials such as slate, stone, and glass. And what else? Kline of Spice Hill Interiors agrees that neutral tones lend a spa-like feel, as do "beautiful porcelain tiles in larger sizes [12" x 24" or 24" x 24"]; they give a cleaner feeling because there's less grout."

MASTER BEDROOM-CUM-FAMILY ROOM Some families prefer to include their children's needs in their master bedroom suite design or renovation plans. "Homeowners may want to reach beyond the primary people who use the room," says Spice Hill Interiors's Kline. She designed a master bedroom suite "that had seating for five so their kids could come in and watch a movie." Master bedrooms, according to Kline, call for some type of auxiliary seating area. "Some people even use a master bedroom almost as a second family room," she says.

the appeal of a show-stopping shower

Anthony Cucciniello, president of 4V Construction & Management Corporation in New Rochelle, recommends installing an extra-large shower in a master bathroom. Lay a stone surface, enclose it in lots of glass, and fill it up with the best fixtures: a seat, double showerheads, steam, and extra sprinklers. "They pulsate from the sides," says Thomas J. Ralph, principal broker at Thomas J. Ralph Real Estate in New Rochelle, "like a car wash."

Steam showers, body sprays, rain heads, hand-held showerheads, and massaging heads all add to the appeal of a shower.

What material to use for your show-stopping shower (and/or bathroom)? "Granite, marble, ceramic, in that order," says Ralph.