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Building Success 101

Q: What is "zoned" heating and cooling?

A: As a way to lower energy costs and enable a more comfortable and healthier indoor living spaces, builders separate areas of a home into smaller zones rather than one big space to heat and cool. In this scheme, smaller, more efficient heating and cooling equipment (furnaces, air conditioners, etc.) are responsible for smaller zones within the house; the warm or cool air generated by the equipment is distributed through metal ducts (or chases) only to its designated zone, thus reducing energy use and enabling more control over temperature and comfort in different areas of the house.

Let the Gaming Begin

The concept of a "media room," as a space specifically devoted to home theater and audio systems, is relatively new. New home designers and builders found the idea so appealing to buyers that media rooms were quickly incorporated into the floor plans of new homes, all along the price spectrum. Such rooms are designed for comfortable television and movie viewing. A great example of this is the new Larrabee model home just completed at Fairway Point, where we display the upstairs rec room as a media room.

Now, professional homebuilders and their design teams are responding to the evolution of media technology with new "media room" features. These new, sophisticated spaces can incorporate multiple, flat-panel plasma or LCD television screens (called "displays" in the trades) for watching broadcast television, surfing the Internet, and playing video games. Also included -- by client demand -- are surround-sound audio, multi-port outlets and docks. These enable a wide range of consumer electronics, and multipurpose furnishings and built-ins that suit both card and electronic game players.

Yes, the media room has become the game room, again driven by homebuyer demand and a host of new (mostly electronic) toys. Builders are educating their buyers about the lifestyle advantages of including such a project and the value it adds to their property.

Consider some of the special features that a true Game Room encompasses, all of which are easily accommodated in a new construction project:

- **Light and shading.** Everyone enjoys natural light ... except when there's a movie playing. Windows are a prime consideration that maintain flexible use of the room when the house is sold. The home's exterior appearance must be considered, as well. To create the optimal movie-watching experience, builders turn to motorized screens and draperies that smoothly draw across the windows. Controlled by remote devices or wall-mounted panels, such screens retract into the wall when not in use or disappear into a subtle housing to retain the room's overall aesthetic design.
- **Multiple displays.** One screen may not be enough in the modern Game Room. Though builders usually leave the purchase of consumer electronics up to the homebuyers after the house is finished, high-tech game rooms must be designed and wired to accommodate several displays and multiple signals. These may include satellite, wireless and wired Internet, cable, personal computers, and (don't forget!) electricity.
- **Seating and storage.** Like its media room predecessor, the new Game Room is a gathering place for family and guests, often engaged in multiple activities at the same time. Space for several zones of comfortable seating is very popular, as is built-in cabinet storage for all of the game players, audio and video equipment, and other components.



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Media rooms are among the new wave of distinct, specialized areas within today's new homes. The "Game Room" reflects the development of high-tech consumer electronics and the consumers' desire to maximize enjoyment of these new toys. As a homebuilding professional, we are equipped to suggest ways to create space for a Game Room and to deliver an amenity that satisfies every goal.

Warm regards,

Brian

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